Film
QUARTERLY

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INTERVIEW

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The sheer quantity of film books issued in the past year has again defeated our hope of covering them all in one issue; we will conclude the annual roundup in our Fall issue. Many significant and useful works made their appearance in this lively year. But, faced with the Darwinian overproduction endemic in publishing, it would benefit the field if authors and editors could begin to spare us yet more books that recycle tired comments on the same 50 or 100 mainline classics; that describe endlessly but analyze fitfully or feebly; that enter the crowded textbook competition with no new perspectives to offer; that compile redundant credit information of no conceivable use value; that purvey fan gossip on the basis of nonexistent or incompetent research; or that assemble basically unrelated papers into *ad hoc* anthologies. If such projects were quietly put to rest, it would free resources and market for the serious works of lasting value upon which the long-range intellectual health of the field depends.

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STEPHEN ANKER teaches at the San Francisco Art Institute and has been program director of the S. F. Cinematheque for the past four years. PETER BATES is a Boston freelance writer. FRANZ A. BIRGEL lives in Philadelphia and is working on his dissertation. JULIANNE BURTON teaches Latin American Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz. ROSS CARE has composed film scores for short films and written for *Sight & Sound, Take One,* and the *Library of Congress Quarterly.* THOMAS DOHERTY teaches American Studies at Boston University. GERALD DORSET lives in New York City. PATRICIA ERENS is the artistic director of the Chicago Jewish Film Festival, editor of the *Journal of Film and Video,* and author of *The Jew in American Cinema.* JOHN FELL is a member of our editorial board and author of the recently republished *Film and the Narrative Tradition.* STEVEN H. GALE teaches at Missouri Southern College (Joplin) and is editor of the forthcoming *Harold Pinter: Critical Essays.* FRED GLASS is a union organizer in the mornings, a

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It was a stroke of luck that I was able to do all the stages in Maria's life with Marita Breuer. Actually, as far as the acting is concerned, I originally wanted to get through the entire film with all of them, with one cast, in so far as it was possible, with make-up and all the available tricks, but I did not succeed. Marita Breuer, who had been totally unknown, proved to be a great actress, and that is why we decided during the filming to continue with her.

The scene at the end, "The Feast of the Living and the Dead"—can one speak here of a stylistic incongruity? I pesonally found it possibly reminiscent of the final sequences in Berlin Alexanderplatz *where all the characters reappear.*

That is something of a prototypical situation. I hadn't seen *Berlin Alexanderplatz* when we did this. There are other films in which something like this occurs: *Fanny and Alexander* also has something like a dance of death in it, as does *Kaos* by the brothers Taviani. I can't explain how it came about; I only know that after such a long preoccupation, the imagination and mind of people move to metaphysical questions. Stylistic incongruity or not, every person will one day think about death. Naturally it is an incongruity, let's not say a stylistic incongruity but rather an incongruity in the reflection, but this incongruity is unavoidable.

The film had an effect like a long novel, so that at the end it was difficult to take leave of the characters.

Yes, it is a farewell scene. It's filmic, and therefore without a form which everyone considers probable. It is in a free form which one can readily understand as simply contrived, but in the end it is conceived as the farewell beyond life.

In the American and British press Heimat *was compared with* Dallas *and* Dynasty. *May I ask what you think of the comparison?*

These TV series are also stories about families. I myself am amazed at how effective the family is as a narrative element. As soon as the family is the connecting element, there is great attentiveness on the part of the viewers, even in a world like ours in which the family as an institution is endangered. But that's about all because *Dallas* and *Dynasty,* like many other commercial standard products, are made according to totally different rules and above all are not at all so personal. There one could easily change directors, authors, shooting locations and one wouldn't even notice it.

NOTES

1. The most informative essay in English on Reitz's work up until 1980 is by Ingrid Scheib-Rothbart and Ruth McCormick in Klaus Phillips, ed., *New German Filmmakers* (New York: Ungar, 1984), pp. 247-265.
2. *Variety,* 12 September 1984, p. 15.
3. *West German Film in the Course of Time* (Bedford Hills: Redgrave Publishing Company, 1984), p. 104.
4. Commenting on *Zero Hour,* Reitz stated: "My own memories seem to contradict the judgment that has been passed upon our parents' generation. To me, it still remains a mystery how Hitler's Germany could have come about: all that murderous brutality on a political level, and at the same time, that feeling of warmth and cozy well-being in the privacy of our own homes. As a result of this, I have learned to live with this ambivalent love/hate feeling that is typical of my generation in Germany." In *Filmzeitung,* September 1977, (n. pag., pp. 15-16); rpt. & transl. by Scheib-Rothbart and McCormick, p. 261.
5. In a telegram sent to the director of the Venice Film Festival in order to convince him that *Heimat* should be shown, Herzog, Kluge, Schlöndorff, von Trotta and Wenders called the film "this requiem for ordinary people." Quoted by Gertrud Koch in *Frauen und Film,* No. 38 (May 1985), p. 107.
6. Edgar Reitz, "Die Kamera ist keine Uhr" in *Liebe zum Kino* (Cologne: Verlag Köln 78, 1984), p. 109. Original title: "Über meine Erfahrung beim Erzählen von Geschichten in der Geschichte" in *Medium,* 1979.
7. Edgar Reitz and Peter Steinbach, *Heimat. Eine deutsche Chronik* (Nördlingen: Greno Verlagsgesellschaft, 1985), p. 501.

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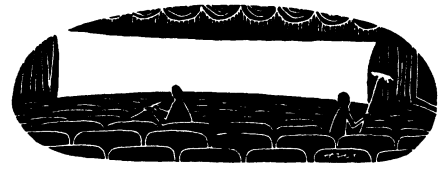

FRANZ A. BIRGEL

You Can Go Home Again:

An Interview with Edgar Reitz

Like many cineastes on this side of the Atlantic, I knew very little about Edgar Reitz. I was aware that he was one of the original signers of the 1962 Oberhausen Manifesto and a collaborator of Alexander Kluge, the doyen of the New German Cinema, with whom he founded the Institute for Film Formation in Ulm, West Germany's only film school until the establishment of the schools in Munich and Berlin.[1] Since his films have very limited release here, I had only seen *Zero Hour* (1976) and his contribution to the omnibus film *Germany in Autumn* (1978). So I was quite dumbfounded when, in June of 1984, I saw posters plastered all over Munich's Schwabing district advertising the premiere of a new film by Reitz: *Heimat,* 16 hours long, shown over two days, with a ticket at 40 marks including food and drink during the intermissions. My initial reaction: What is this? Is Reitz trying to outdo Syberberg? Another cinematic *Gesamtkunstwerk* of Wagnerian proportions filmed on the stage? I was curious but unable to obtain a ticket. After the screening it seemed like everyone was talking or writing about the film. Unable to attend later showings in Berlin or at the Venice Film Festival (where it unanimously won the FIPRESCI critics award), I had to wait until Easter weekend when it was presented at New York's Museum of Modern Art. Spending Easter with the Simon family in Hunsrück proved to be a memorable experience, even if it was only vicarious and voyeuristic. I'll admit my bias and confess that I agree with Ronald Holloway's evaluation that "*Heimat* (Homeland) is not only the fulfillment of all the hopes of the New German Cinema over the past few decades, but should also go down as a milestone in contemporary film history."[2]

In 1980, while three better known directors of the New German Cinema were pursuing their dreams abroad—Herzog in Peru pulling a ship up a mountain, Wenders still working on *Hammett* at Zoetrope, Schlöndorff in Beirut planning his next film—Edgar Reitz was living in a small town in Hunsrück, West Germany, recollecting his dreams and memories along with those of his family and of local residents. Together with Peter Steinbach, he was writing the 2000-page script for *Heimat,* a semi-autobiographical chronicle about life in rural Germany between 1919 and 1982.

With *Heimat,* Reitz not only burst the bounds of traditional cinema but also created a new form of critical *Heimatfilm.* The original *Heimatfilme* of the thirties, forties, and fifties, prime examples of *Papas Kino,* extolled the virtues of family and home while presenting an uncritical idyllization and idealization of rural life. Beginning with films like Peter Fleischmann's *Hunting Scenes from Lower Bavaria* (1968), the younger film-makers produced a series of *Anti-Heimatfilme* which, in the words of Eric Rentschler, "explode stereotypes, deconstruct false images of the past and fashion new ones that speak to the present."[3] Whereas most of the former films are dismissed today as trivial kitsch, the latter usually left almost no element of country life unscathed. In *Heimat,* Reitz affirms basic family values, but the home village is not depicted as being necessarily good in itself. Born in 1932, Reitz belongs to the generation of West German intellectuals who grew up with very mixed feelings toward their homeland,[4] and this resulted in some of the intentional ambivalences in this film. Continuing in the tradition of the critical *Anti-Heimatfilm,* he shows, for example, how everything and everyone foreign is distrusted: the narrow-minded inhabitants disdain the foreign-looking, dark-haired Apollonia, and Klärchen, an outsider, is also never fully accepted. Reitz's attitude toward his main characters is non-judgmental; they are archetypal, and one accepts them as real precisely because of their ambivalences. None of them are paragons,

Early in HEIMAT, *the family picnics and Paul does radio experiments*

except possibly the self-sacrificing Maria, but she loses her favorite son Hermann through her overprotectiveness and inability to tolerate his affair with Klärchen. Whereas the earlier *Heimatfilme* tried to hold back the clock and present an escape from reality, Reitz shows it slowly ticking and accurately recreates a past reality that speaks to us now. He achieves a sense of authenticity not only through the visual details (props, sets, locations), but also through the Stanislavsky style of acting and through the use of the Hunsrück dialect, with characters from other parts of Germany speaking their own dialect. Over a period of 15 hours, 24 minutes and ten seconds, he presents the viewer with common, ordinary people whose little, everyday stories had been overshadowed by the major events of European history.[5]

The obvious similarity between *Heimat* and Carl Froehlich's 1938 film of the same name (starring "the German Garbo," Zarah Leander) exists in the theme of finding one's home again. In this respect, the story of young Hermann mirrors Reitz's own experiences. When Maria and Anton stop Hermann's affair with Klärchen, they also destroy his relationship to them and the village. He leaves to attend the university and becomes an accomplished and respected composer of esoteric electronic music in the style of Karlheinz Stockhausen. Herein one may see a parallel to Reitz's own early technical innovations and experimentations with film. Following the first radio broadcast of a composition by Hermann, a critic asks why the music lacks emotion. Years later, when Maria dies, Hermann comes home and reevaluates his relationship to the village. The product of this reunion, of this reconciliation with his roots, is a stirring oratorio in the Hunsrück dialect which is performed and recorded in a nearby cavern. In reality, this oratorio is the film *Heimat*.

The following are excerpts from an interview held in German in Munich on August 28, 1985.

"In our German culture there is hardly a more ambivalent feeling, hardly a more terrible mixture of happiness and brutality than the experience behind the word 'Heimat.'"

—Edgar Reitz[6]

"Artistic ideas are always rooted in the homeland."[7] —the philosopher in the script

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Your film Heimat *appears to reflect a growing tendency among European writers and intellectuals to reevaluate America's influence in Europe and to rediscover their own homeland and regional cultures.*

Our admiration for the USA plays a very important role in the development of the countries of Western Europe. For over thirty years this has motivated an entire generation of people and influenced their lifestyle. Sometimes we had the impression that we were more American than the Americans themselves. Now, forty years later, people are reflecting upon this, and partly it's combined with certain emotions. For example, the peace movement—which is very strong in Germany and also exists in other European countries in this sense—is very skeptical of the big-power politics of both major powers. But in regard to the Americans in particular, it has become critical because it is, so to say, our side against which criticism is employed. It doesn't sound very new to say that the Russians' claims to hegemony are a danger to world peace, but it sounds new if one also says it about the Americans. In addition to this, a period has begun during which European artists and intellectuals are reflecting upon their own history, upon the European tradition. For decades we have been seeking a European identity. We have not found it in the attempts we made at the Common Market which standardized everything and suppressed the regional, individual characteristics. We find no identity in it, and that is why a reaction has started which is based upon the regional characteristics, that is to say, upon the *Heimat*. Now, one no longer speaks of Italy, France or England, but of, let's say, Sardinia, Tuscany, Bavaria or Hunsrück. One finds again an unbelievable culture in these regions, something which appeared to have been lost for us, something of which we as Europeans can be proud: our cultural heritage, and along with it our self-confidence or, if you want, our nationality. And there begin the activations of regional cultural ideas and this, on the other hand, as common *European* property. Thus, suddenly the Europeans derive great pleasure from the characteristics of the different regions within Europe. In pop-music we suddenly have loads of songs in dialect. Everywhere small food stores are opening, selling local specialties. People are experiencing pleasure, euphoria from going on trips of discovery in Europe, from traveling around more in their own countries. It is very clearly recognizable in the film, and my main experience with *Heimat* was that everywhere in Europe people saw it as a European film.

Not as a German film?

Not in the sense of an especially German examination of German history by a German and thereby this especially German exoticism. Also, concerning the historical aspect, one sees in this Hunsrück a piece of Central European countryside which one looks at quite differently than when one looks just at Germany. In the first part there's a small episode about the French equestrienne who rides from Paris to Berlin and comes through the town, and it is said that Schabbach is the center of the world because the lines Paris–Rome and North Pole–South Pole intersect here. That is a metaphor, of course. In Sweden they say, Schabbach is the center of the world; in Italy, in Paris they say, Schabbach is the center.

They actually say this?

Yes, they do. Two weeks ago, sitting in a café in Paris, I heard from all sides, from the other tables, the German word *Heimat*. The people were not speaking about the film, but about personal things and had taken up the German word as a loan-word. No corresponding word exists in the Romance languages. *La patrie* or *mon pays* in French is something totally different. Basically one cannot translate the word *Heimat*. The meaning and emotional content of *Heimat* exist everywhere in the world, but not everywhere is there a word for it, and here the word establishes itself everywhere through the film.

What do you personally understand by the word Heimat*?*

The word is always linked to strong feelings, mostly remembrances and longing. *Heimat* always evokes in me the feeling of something lost or very far away, something which one cannot easily find or find again. In this respect, it is also a German romantic word and a romantic feeling with a particular romantic dialectic. *Heimat* is such that if one would go closer and closer to it, one would discover that at the moment of arrival it is gone, it has dissolved into nothingness. It seems to me that one has a more precise idea of *Heimat* the further one is away from it. This for me is *Heimat,* it's fiction, and one can arrive there only in poetry, and I include film in poetry. German Romanticism presents a worldview which today can say very much to us. Romanticism conveys to us the message that lost things, our childhood, our dreams, our ideas, the world of pure ideas, even in the political and social sense—what I refer to as the lost realms—are brought back into our lives through the philosophy of Romanticism. In this worldview both things move to a comparable plane: the world of poetry, of utopias, of dreams and longings as an equal world alongside that of business, of everyday life. The romantic concept connects these aspects in a dialectical manner by means of a certain negation in which one has as the most important experience in life or with oneself the realization that wherever one wants to grasp life with one's hands, it will disintegrate between one's fingers. Thus both the material and the utopian or romantic change into an illusion if one tries to seize them concretely.

When and how did you get the idea to make the film Heimat*?*

It was not an idea for the entire work at the beginning. The starting point was a crisis. In 1978 I had made a very unsuccessful film, *The Tailor of Ulm,* and I had great debts. I no longer wanted to make films. This entire field had become eerie for me. Since 1962, since Oberhausen, I had been working with my colleagues on the development of a new German cinema, and the disappointment was so great that it resulted in a moment of resignation. I thought about what I could do, based on my knowledge and abilities, and I thought of writing. I wanted to write down my story—that is, how did it come about that

Maria, early in the six-decades story

I make films. How it is possible, since I was a youth from a Hunsrück village where the parents are children of farmers, and in the whole family there were never any academics, no intellectuals, no artists. I asked myself: what kind of roots does all this have? How did these things develop? And so I began first by describing my grandmother, the grandparents. Then I was suddenly very interested in making a portrait of my father, and that is Paul who tinkers with radios in the twenties, who dreams of faraway lands and who leaves the village one day without saying a word. My father, of course, never did this. He dreamed but never did it. I wanted to write about the continuation of these dreams, that the legs of man also travel to where the imagination leads. That is how the story came into being. After a few months it became the beginning of a long novel. And in this phase I gave the novel fragment to a television producer of the WDR in Cologne to read. That was Joachim von Mengershausen, with whom I had already worked previously on a film. He said I should write a script. I said to him, but listen, that's impossible, one cannot make such a film, it would be at least twenty hours long. And he said, yes, but maybe individual parts can be found in it from which one can make a film. But I had no desire to write a script, I only wanted to narrate. Then I sat down with Peter Steinbach who had been my coauthor for *Zero Hour,* and we wrote for one year. In the end it was a script of 2,000 pages.

While we were writing, Mengershausen was trying to get production money for the film. But that took a very long time because after

we finished the script I made a documentary film, *Stories from the Hunsrück Villages,* about the countryside and the people who live in these villages. And only after this film was finished in 1981 did we have the money to film a part of *Heimat,* but only a third of it because after four months the money was used up. We had to interrupt work, sent the team home, and again fought for financing. That was a very important experience for me because of this solidarity of the team; they all kept themselves available, and two months later they all came together again. Then the last two parts were still missing, and again we had no more money and we had to interrupt again. Only at the end of 1982 did we get the rest of the money. Thus, after a total of about 300 shooting days we put together the material, and then I spent a year and a half editing it. The film was finished for the premiere at the Munich Film Festival in June of 1984.

Then you did conceive of the film as a TV film?

One can't say that because, to be sure, most of the money came from German television, but not all of it. It was also very unclear to the television people what one could do with the film, because it was not a series in so and so many parts and with a special dramaturgy for continuing episodes, but rather one single story. We always left this question of individual parts open in the contracts and said once the work was finished we'd see what could be done with it, in what manner it would be broadcast and what else we would do with it. Because I always said to myself, I have to find another way to utilize it in order to raise the remaining money. From the very beginning we filmed everything with 35mm film. The first complete version had no divisions. It was one single film of about eighteen hours. We then sat down with the editors of the WDR and the SFB, the two television stations, and for days we thought about how we can make sections out of it for television. For the cinema we made a two-parter, two times eight hours for two days, because we told ourselves no person can see it in one sitting, one must be able to go home and sleep. Only afterwards did we divide it into eleven parts for television, but these are of different length, so that even here it doesn't have the character of a television series. We used none of the formulas of television or TV series. We worked only according to our concepts of cinema, and there, however, also outside the rules because 16-hour films for the cinema just don't exist. It's more in the details, more in the conception of the individual scenes; the entire narrative style is cinematic.

How did you decide upon the apparently random alternation between black-and-white and color film?

That was also a cinematic idea. The entire classical period of cinema history and the idea of what is perceived as beautiful on the screen —that has a tradition in the black-and-white cinema of the past. Since the film deals with the past and the present, it was important for us to also use these methods, the old narrative form in black-and-white. The change between black-and-white and color is very free, not according to an abstract principle, but more according to the concept of affection for the images in the individual cases. One could say that the color material has the characteristic of underlining, or printing individual passages of a novel in italics. We had very few problems with the audiences. What we had hoped came about, namely, that the audiences derive pleasure from the fact that there is not always color, that the eye does not get exhausted by it.

Whereby the black-and-white parts underscore the mood of the twenties, thirties and forties, often recreating film images from those periods, and the color sequences, especially in the story of young Hermann from the fifties, when Technicolor was in vogue, also add to the atmosphere of the period.

It belongs to the characteristics of this film. When we knew that this would be a film of over 16 hours in length, we no longer had to consider any conventions or observe any rules. We said we would film in black-and-white when we felt that it would bring stronger images in the story we were telling, and at moments when the story we wanted to tell could not be told in black-and-white because the material could not convey it, then we would change to color without any inhibitions. That's why at the very beginning when Paul comes home and stands at the smithy

and his father hammers the iron, the glowing sparks which leap forth—that was a color picture. And we simply said, OK, let's do it in color, and then we continued in black-and-white.

Just like the explosion?

Yes, just like the explosion or the bouquet of flowers thrown out of the airplane. There are hundreds of such examples.

In the film you presented life as a continuum from 1919 until 1982, and everything in the film is depicted from the perspective of the villagers. Some critics in the US thought that you only skimmed or glossed over the Nazi period, whereby they directly or indirectly accused you of rivisionism. One critic wrote that Heimat *is an example of today's reactionary climate.*

For many years we have been encountering these clever people who say that the Nazis are "the others." They themselves are, so to speak, morally in the good position. I find it is neither a sufficient nor an intellectual position to be only moral, to place oneself on the side of the morally good and by criticism only to understand the moral evil. For 40 years we Germans have been asked the question, "How was the Third Reich possible?" That it was something politically disastrous and morally evil, that this Nazi rule brought endless misfortune to millions of people—no one denies that except for a few stubborn idiots. There were 80 million Germans of whom at least 90% cooperated with Hitler in one way or another. If one asks this question morally, then one would have to say it is completely impossible. That would mean that these many millions of people wanted in one way or another what happened there, that is, that there was a real shaping of opinion or at least that a mood had developed which makes an entire nation into criminals. I can't believe that, rather I think that this Nazi Reich was possible because the moral question does not play that role in the lives of people which we think it does. It is quite obviously so that there's a vital principle which must develop completely alogically and, in a certain manner, blind to external happenings in order for a society to exist at all. I think there is a certain anarchic element in the nature of man and of society, a principle of living-in-spite-of-everything under

Lucy, who has profited while the Nazis were in power, loses no time in getting along with the Americans.

all conceivable circumstances. And I wanted to study something like this. Then there is something else. In the history books the lives of the mighty, the great wars, battles, great disasters are described. But the small everyday things which affect the majority of the people do not appear in the history books, and their testimonies and sources are not collected, preserved and handed down. The only thing we have is what we carry in our memory. These private testimonies, these documents usually do not go beyond the family, and these sources disappear along with the people whose lives are documented there.

How reliable are memory and interpretations of these personal documents?

I noticed when one deals with something like this that it takes on a very unique structure. What we store in our memory is not ordered chronologically, nor is it retrievable in a logical form. When we exchange memories, even when we silently remember or write down from memory, then we notice that memory puts together the experiences which have been stored in our mind in a new manner. Memory does not remember, but rather memory is creative, it builds new connections. It works associatively, narratively like a poet, and this applies to all people. The actual past reality is never really achieved. Family documents, photos, every possible private souvenir, which one keeps for sentimental reasons or others, are constantly recurring concrete occasions for our creative imagination to deal with the past. Even the official historiography of the lives of the mighty is subject to these rules, although it claims to proceed scientifically. In the private sphere it has been

Young Hermann, Maria's son, and Klärchen—whom the family drives away.

clearly proven that no objectivity of any kind prevails, but rather, at every encounter with it, it is a matter of putting the story together anew. And in this form of remembering, something very important happens: it's not that we can thereby return into the past, but rather we appropriate it, we use it for our present-day life in a manner which is useful for us at the moment for our relationships with one another. And that is how *Heimat* was made. That is how I worked with the material, in the manner in which one deals with private history, with personal history. It's not a question of telling these people who want to form a moral judgment about the Third Reich how the Holocaust functioned. Rather it's a question of a person living in Europe, in Germany today, telling other people living today through these means of memory stories and relationships which are important for us today and which are not here to be analyzed, but rather are here to generate communication, to establish connections. And that works with *Heimat*. We proved that it works because 400 people sit in the theater for 16 hours and afterwards they are no longer people who just happened to sit next to each other in the theater, rather they come out and during the intermissions and afterwards they are joined together and shaped in a certain manner by common feeling and experience.

Remembering together and in free, associative, playful and creative forms brings us together. If we subject our ability to remember, which I call creative, in a schoolmasterish manner to certain rules, for example, to the rule of chronology or that of causality or morality, and bring people together to remember in this way, then our relationship with one another becomes abstract, and remembering does not lead to our becoming communicative, in that we find common ground through this creative imagination, but rather it fences us off from one another.

And that is why I'd like to get back to the beginning. Such critics would like to permit this remembering only according to an abstract moral scheme. They are schoolmasters who want to suppress our imagination and our ability to play freely with what we carry within us, and who want to regulate it according to Prussian, according to military rules. I have nothing against the moral attitude of the people who presented *Holocaust,* but that film series is also dominated by a clear schoolmasterish morality. I have nothing against the schoolmasters, but they don't bring people ahead. I ask the question again, how was it possible for the Nazis to kill millions of Jews in the concentration camps—only because they were such fanatics for order, only because they were people with such a perverted imagination that they could do everything in an orderly way, that they were able to place order above life. What I am defending here is a playful, free, human principle as opposed to a principle of order. And if someone says the Nazis are "the others," I do not say that, but rather I study in myself the ability to follow or not to follow, I study in myself these feelings of seduction, or temptation. When I had to describe these years, the thirties, I always asked myself: I'm a Hunsrück child, was born in this village, if I hadn't attended this school, hadn't attended the university, hadn't been

born into these years in which one had a different information system—based on the atmosphere, on the family situation which had a formative influence on me, I would have been just as seducible as the others—not in a moral or wider sense, but at the moment, in details, just as at certain moments I probably would have been afraid and run away as very many did. If you remember little Anton, when the Hitler Youth uniform is put on him, he has such difficulties moving in it and asks what he should do if they should come and force him, to which the grandmother responds then you have a heart condition. That is, we'll find some way in the family so that you can get out of it. Thus, I probably would have been a coward at some moment and would have survived, and I would not have become a murderer because I do not have in me this principle of the rigid fanatics for order, but I have in me elements of this and that. I never say the Nazis are "the others."

I asked that question because that was the main criticism of the film.

I am neither the conscience of Germany, nor am I here to judge. It upsets me when something like this comes from the American side because we, as very eager and enthusiastic students, learned democracy from the Americans in the years after the war. We learned from them all the idealism concerning humanity during the reeducation period. For 30 years we listened patiently to the nation which, with moral justification, was the victor in World War II. We, the defeated, heard from the victors what was morally good, and we really took it to heart. But at some point a new phase must be entered with this question.

I feel myself as part of a development taking place in Europe today to think like this. Now in September a European film festival will take place where the film-makers from all of Europe will come together, and someone already called it an anti-American festival. No, it is not an anti-American festival. Why are we anti-American just because we're saying it's a European festival? It's absurd.

The women in your film, especially the grandmother and Maria, appear to function as a constant nurturing principle, almost as personifications or embodiments of the concept of Heimat. *Is that also one reason why you had Marita Breuer play Maria from the age of 19 to 80? Because over the years one male character is often played by two or three actors.*

No, that turned out that way. I am a child of the generation which grew up mainly in a world of women. I believe that in Germany but also in general the twentieth century is a century of women. They have undergone a very essential development. In the war women had to take care of life as a whole unlike ever before. When we were children we lived in families in which there were no men. They were all without exception somewhere in the war, and thereafter years passed until they came home again. Thus, we grew up in a very concrete women's world, and the manner in which women took life into their hands had nothing to do with the theory of women's emancipation. They left to the men the so-called important social areas and saw that everything was collapsing—politics, economy, supply of food, everything. The entire world of men collapsed, but with the intelligence of women and mothers, there was a survival nevertheless. It had an effect for many years into the fifties, the economic miracle years; there was again a world of men, but the world of women continued to function. I wanted to portray that. Also, I have many more memories of these women because one does not remember the fathers who were away. I saw very few, and when they returned, they were all morally and physically broken people for years. The women figures are always stronger in my works than the men. I have more, much more interest and more concrete memories and more feeling for them.

Maria (Marita Breuer) in 1967 when Hermann visits—now a well known composer

It was a stroke of luck that I was able to do all the stages in Maria's life with Marita Breuer. Actually, as far as the acting is concerned, I originally wanted to get through the entire film with all of them, with one cast, in so far as it was possible, with make-up and all the available tricks, but I did not succeed. Marita Breuer, who had been totally unknown, proved to be a great actress, and that is why we decided during the filming to continue with her.

The scene at the end, "The Feast of the Living and the Dead"—can one speak here of a stylistic incongruity? I pesonally found it possibly reminiscent of the final sequences in Berlin Alexanderplatz *where all the characters reappear.*

That is something of a prototypical situation. I hadn't seen *Berlin Alexanderplatz* when we did this. There are other films in which something like this occurs: *Fanny and Alexander* also has something like a dance of death in it, as does *Kaos* by the brothers Taviani. I can't explain how it came about; I only know that after such a long preoccupation, the imagination and mind of people move to metaphysical questions. Stylistic incongruity or not, every person will one day think about death. Naturally it is an incongruity, let's not say a stylistic incongruity but rather an incongruity in the reflection, but this incongruity is unavoidable.

The film had an effect like a long novel, so that at the end it was difficult to take leave of the characters.

Yes, it is a farewell scene. It's filmic, and therefore without a form which everyone considers probable. It is in a free form which one can readily understand as simply contrived, but in the end it is conceived as the farewell beyond life.

In the American and British press Heimat *was compared with* Dallas *and* Dynasty. *May I ask what you think of the comparison?*

These TV series are also stories about families. I myself am amazed at how effective the family is as a narrative element. As soon as the family is the connecting element, there is great attentiveness on the part of the viewers, even in a world like ours in which the family as an institution is endangered. But that's about all because *Dallas* and *Dynasty,* like many other commercial standard products, are made according to totally different rules and above all are not at all so personal. There one could easily change directors, authors, shooting locations and one wouldn't even notice it.

NOTES

1. The most informative essay in English on Reitz's work up until 1980 is by Ingrid Scheib-Rothbart and Ruth McCormick in Klaus Phillips, ed., *New German Filmmakers* (New York: Ungar, 1984), pp. 247-265.
2. *Variety,* 12 September 1984, p. 15.
3. *West German Film in the Course of Time* (Bedford Hills: Redgrave Publishing Company, 1984), p. 104.
4. Commenting on *Zero Hour,* Reitz stated: "My own memories seem to contradict the judgment that has been passed upon our parents' generation. To me, it still remains a mystery how Hitler's Germany could have come about: all that murderous brutality on a political level, and at the same time, that feeling of warmth and cozy well-being in the privacy of our own homes. As a result of this, I have learned to live with this ambivalent love/hate feeling that is typical of my generation in Germany." In *Filmzeitung,* September 1977, (n. pag., pp. 15-16); rpt. & transl. by Scheib-Rothbart and McCormick, p. 261.
5. In a telegram sent to the director of the Venice Film Festival in order to convince him that *Heimat* should be shown, Herzog, Kluge, Schlöndorff, von Trotta and Wenders called the film "this requiem for ordinary people." Quoted by Gertrud Koch in *Frauen und Film,* No. 38 (May 1985), p. 107.
6. Edgar Reitz, "Die Kamera ist keine Uhr" in *Liebe zum Kino* (Cologne: Verlag Köln 78, 1984), p. 109. Original title: "Über meine Erfahrung beim Erzählen von Geschichten in der Geschichte" in *Medium,* 1979.
7. Edgar Reitz and Peter Steinbach, *Heimat. Eine deutsche Chronik* (Nördlingen: Greno Verlagsgesellschaft, 1985), p. 501.

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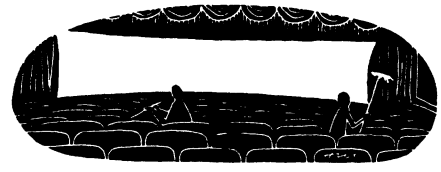

PHILLIP LOPATE

A Taste for Naruse

In *Mother,* the teenage girl who narrates the Naruse movie describes her parent with a telling detail: "My mother prefers a small broom." The grandiosity of a pushbroom suits this self-contained, struggling woman less than getting down on her knees and bringing the dirt to her in close little arcs. So, too, the director's own cinematic methods: the small broom of Mikio Naruse industriously gathers together the waste, the castoffs, the impurities of life, clearing a space for us to contemplate them.

Posthumously—in fact, sixteen years after his death—Mikio Naruse is being presented to the American public as "a master of the Japanese cinema." A retrospective of his work has just toured nine cities, with the Museum of Modern Art in New York repeating the package because of enthusiastic audience response. Though most of the titles have returned to Japan, East-West Classics, a new firm, is taking the chance of putting several into commercial distribution. Naruse certainly has his champions and fanatical devotees (myself among them), but after you get past the first line of cineastes, it may prove a harder sell. One reason is that, since he was never blessed with an international-festival publicity buildup during this lifetime, he is unlikely to get it here now.

With Naruse there are other problems of receptivity, because his work is so quiet and, to audiences primed on improbable victories, downbeat. Even sophisticated viewers may remain skeptical after seeing only one Naruse film: "Okay, but what's so special about this?" The material, dealing as it does with women's suffering, seems vaguely soap-operaish; the production values are B-picture; and the visual

All photos for this article courtesy of East-West Films, 1529 Acton Street, Berkeley, CA 94702.

Naruse directs Yōko Tsukasa and Yūzō Kayama in SCATTERED CLOUDS (1967)

MOTHER (1952)

style is handsome but not dazzling. Compared to the other three undisputed giants of Japanese cinema, Mizoguchi with his majestic flowing-scroll tracking shots, Ozu with his static *tatami* camera setups, Kurosawa with his bravura action montages, Naruse seems to lack an immediately identifiable, "arty" trademark.

Naruse specialized in dialogue scenes, where the underlying tensions of conflicting self-interest are brought out with masterly nuance. Even his early silent films like *Street Without End* have superb dialogue confrontations—without the benefit of sound! It is above all Naruse's great editing, his perfectly timed reverse angles and two-shots which sustain the illusionistic poignancy of his narratives. Kurosawa, himself a great editor, described with admiration the overall effect of Naruse's method: "A flow of shots that looks calm and ordinary at first glance, reveals itself to be like a deep river with a quiet surface disguising a fast-raging current underneath."

Repeated visits to Naruse films draw one into a strangely singular, self-contained world, like a favorite drab restaurant, reassuringly melancholy at nightfall, to which one keeps returning. Naruse's forlorn flavor can become addictive. But in order to acquire the taste, viewers may need to surrender their mental speeding to a less hurried, subtler movement. The effort pays off: if Naruse's films are invariably about disappointment, *he* does not disappoint—no more than does Chekhov, an artist he greatly resembles in stimulating our appetite for larger and more bitter doses of truth.

One of the charms of Naruse's art is its earned pessimism. It takes for granted that life is unhappy; therefore, we can relax in the possession of sadness, acquiesce from the start to a fated disenchantment, the only suspense being how he will bring it about this time. In American films and novels, it often takes the characters three-fourths of the plot to win through to the insight of life's unhappiness, whining and kicking all the way. We can see it as a trade-off: American art has a dynamism and energy generated by its optimism, Japanese art a serenity and grace by its acceptance of the persistence of suffering. Naruse can even be playful about it, as when he shows two geisha in *Late Chrysanthemums* competing for who can sing the most morose drinking song, and one of them says crossly: "I *know* life is like that already!" It is expected knowledge, part of the culture. As Naruse himself put it: "From the youngest age, I have thought that the world we live in betrays us; the thought still remains with me."

Mikio Naruse remains something of a mystery-man. All that we know in English comes to us from Anderson and Richie's pioneering book, *The Japanese Film,* and from Audie Bock's invaluable writings on the director. Naruse was born in 1905 and had a rather grim childhood, the youngest of three children of a poor embroiderer and his wife. A lifelong friend recalls that "the only thing the boy Mikio ever asked for from his family was a winter coat he saw in the window of a pawn shop . . ." Naruse's father died when he was young and his mother shortly after; he was brought up by a "not overly affectionate elder sister and brother." Though he had a passion for literature, particularly fiction, and hoped to go to university, lack of money forced him to quit school. He got a job as a prop man at Shochiku Film Studios, and lived in a rented room near the studio. "The darkest period of my life," he admitted later.

The early days of Japanese film production offered opportunities for rapid advancement; Mizoguchi and Ozu apprenticed for only one year before being promoted to director. Typically, the unassuming Naruse spent ten years toiling as an assistant director before getting his chance. Even then, he was called on to make slapstick comedies with which he had little rapport. Still, they have a certain interest today: the earliest surviving, alternately titled *Flunky, Work Hard* or *Little Man, Do Your*

Best (a world of difference between these two translations!), shows a poor insurance salesman making a fool of himself and accepting any humiliation to compete for a rich man's clientele. Meanwhile, he ignores his son who gets seriously injured. This pattern of slapstick taking a sudden tearjerker turn was very popular with Japanese audiences at the time. What seems surprising, as do some of Ozu's early silents, is the rather wild "showoff" style—quick cutting, weird camera angles, multiple dissolves—probably influenced by German expressionist films of the twenties, and so different from Naruse's later work. But we can already see the same interest in people at the end of their monetary rope, the same humanistic, realistic atmosphere, and—heretical as this may sound—the same propensity for humor. Naruse buffs get so caught up talking about his "pessimism" that they lose sight of the many comic touches and amusing nuances of behavior in all his films. He always takes pleasure in the idiosyncracies and one-track minds of his secondary characters, bringing vitality to the smallest bit parts. Even more (and here I am again tempted to cite Chekhov), the care with which the characters' illusions are set in place and then, at just the right moment, snatched away, produces a spasm rooted in comic techniques. So perhaps Naruse's long training in silent comedies contributed to his later, impeccable sense of timing in melodrama.

Nevertheless, he was eager to deal with a kind of material he felt temperamentally closer to, and so began his first efforts in the *shomin-geki* genre that was itself getting under way. Anderson and Richie define the *shomin-geki* as "drama about the common people. . . . Essentially a film about the proletarian or lower-middle-class, about the sometimes humorous, sometimes bitter relations within the family, about the struggle for existence, it is the kind of film many Japanese think of as being about 'you and me'." I might add that it is also heavier on character than plot, and allows for considerably more atmospheric digressions than a typically Occidental film would allow. It is easy to see why the novelistically inclined Naruse would be drawn to this meandering, quotidian, slice-of-life genre.

Naruse made a low salary, and his existence

In LATE CHRYSANTHEMUMS, *Kin's old lover turns up wanting to borrow money*

outside the studio was anything but the glamorous stereotype of a film director's lifestyle. "He rented a second-floor room," Bock tells us, "from a family who did progressively worse in their sushi business, and every time they moved to poorer quarters, Naruse went along." A loner, he spent most after-hours in the sort of bars and cheap restaurants that would appear so accurately in his later films, his main social life consisting of chatting with the working women who served him.

Meanwhile, though Ozu praised his work, the studio head at Shochiku seemed less enthralled. "Naruse, we don't need two Ozus," he was told, forcing him to leave for another studio, Toho, where he worked rather unobtrusively for the next thirty years. Today, when we see their films side by side, Naruse hardly seems an Ozu copycat. Certainly there are similarities: the quiet tone, the preference for contemporary domestic material (both resisted "period" pictures), and the cinematic restraint—increasingly Naruse was coming to rein in his camera and keep it relatively still and indoors.

On the other hand, Naruse showed people who were living much closer to the edge than Ozu did. Ozu's is more a gentle, middle-class world where manners are still respected and a rude word can cause a character to burst into tears. In the same situation a Naruse character might shrug or laugh in the other person's face. In Ozu, the "plot" often involves an exquisite dissection of ritualized politeness to reveal the characters' true emotions by the film's end. Naruse's people make no bones about how they feel. When they want to wound,

WHEN A WOMAN ASCENDS THE STAIRS

they take off the gloves; when they want money or sex, they demand it openly. Perhaps the main difference is that Naruse is dealing mainly with the urban poor, where such time-consuming, stereotypically "Japanese" manners might be considered a luxury. The conditions under which his straitened families live, all packed together, getting on each other's nerves, promotes a style of interaction at once balder, gruffer, and refreshingly freer than found in Ozu's decorous households.

Typically in a Naruse film, there is one character with a little more sensitivity and refinement, a sort of audience-surrogate who can still wince at the coarseness and selfishness of those around her. Most Naruse families have at least two loafers and spongers; the family in *Lightning* is rather extreme in its slatternly, parasitic behavior—fun to watch, actually, as three half-brothers and sisters (each from a different father) and their mother leech off of one upright jobholding daughter. Lest we think this family has reached bottom, a beggar appears at the door (a typical Naruse reminder that there are others worse off); their casual dismissal of him barely interrupts the conversation, implying what a commonplace event it is.

Naruse may be the most materialist director in the history of cinema. It is remarkable how much of his dialogue is taken up with the collection and solicitation of money. When a new character enters the scene, his or her first words are apt to be: "I am here for the 35 yen you owe me." Naruse's movies are filled with characters who are landlords, moneylenders or bill-collecting merchants, on the one hand, and poor relatives, gigolos, and ex-husbands looking for a handout, on the other. He chooses his heroines usually from the most vulnerable individuals in Japanese society: those outside the marital family protection, single women or widows. As they struggle to keep their heads above water and, even more, to gain a measure of independence, to own their own laundry shop or bar or geisha house, they scramble to get loose of one creditor, only to find in their "rescuer" a new mortgage, a new master, a new indentured servitude. If the creditor is male, there may be an implied sexual obligation incurred as well.

Just as every Fassbinder film, for all his fecundity, turns out to be a demonstration of one form of exploitation or another, so all of Naruse's stories boil down to the problem of debts. Being obligated is a powerful notion in the Japanese psyche, and for that reason Japanese people will sometimes take great pains to avoid the condition. Or, in Naruse's films, to rationalize it: as one geisha tells her house-madam, "I have obligations to you, but I also have reproaches." Family obligations are not so easily avoided, but that does not mean they need always be undertaken graciously. The beleaguered Keiko in *When A Woman Ascends the Stairs* helps her pathetic brother pay for his son's operation, but makes sure by her nasty manner that he will not soon bother her again. In a sense, Naruse can be seen as documenting a moment in Japanese social history when Westernization weakened the nourishing core of the family support system, without, however, releasing the individual from its onerous economic obligations.

We do not know what Naruse's political views were, if any. He shied away from making militaristic propaganda films in the early forties, just as he avoided leftwing-democratic agitprop after the war. "Commitment" was not his style; but we learn more about the heavy weight of money on the world from him than from any other director.

In 1935 Naruse made one of his best films, *Wife, Be Like a Rose,* which was not only very popular in Japan, winning the Kinema Jumpo Award (equivalent to the Oscar), but which was the first Japanese talkie to play in New York. The *Variety* reviewer at the time

admitted that the film was "completely without hokum" and that "Jap femmes are okay for looks," but predicted that it would "draw moderately well in a few arties. . . . Otherwise no dice." In any event *Wife, Be Like a Rose* was a more lighthearted project than usual for Naruse, touched by the ebullient Clair-like lyricism of early sound films.

Revolving around the efforts of a happily-in-love young woman to bring her estranged parents together so that all may be happy, the film is most riveting to me for its portrayal of the girl's mother. A haiku poetess whose self-absorbed intellectual life helped drive away her laborer ex-husband, the mother is portrayed both satirically and sympathetically. Yes, she is a bit precious with her poems on amorous loss, but she is also strong-minded, independent and charmingly melancholy. One cannot help feeling somehow relieved for her when she remains alone at the film's end, instead of being reconciled. Once again, Naruse shows compassion for solitariness, and implies the difficulty, if not impossibility, of marriage in a comedy ostensibly defending that institution.

To his colleagues' surprise, the reclusive director pulled a major coup by winning the hand of his beautiful young star, the ingenue who had been so life-affirming in *Wife, Be Like a Rose.* Naturally, happiness was not so easily obtained for a man like Naruse. In fact he "went into a slump which lasted fifteen years and was the most serious any major director has ever experienced," according to Anderson and Richie. There is some debate among Naruseans as to whether his wife was at fault, or other factors. Those who argue

WIFE, BE LIKE A ROSE

FLOATING CLOUDS

the former point to all the portraits of shrewish, nagging wives in his later films. Those against say the wives in Naruse films always nagged. I myself do not see how we can blame the woman for making him unproductively miserable when misery had always been a creative spur to him before. The difficult war years, the foolish projects the studio foisted on him, and his own creative fatigue may also have been at fault. In any case, coincidentally or not, when Naruse's marriage collapsed he moved into his old shabby rented rooms, returned to his sake bars—and entered upon his most fertile period as an artist.

From 1951 to 1964, Naruse produced his greatest masterpieces, *Late Chrysanthemums, Floating Clouds, Flowing, Yearning,* and *When A Woman Ascends the Stairs,* along with many satisfying films just below this standard, such as *Husband and Wife, Repast, Lightning, Mother,* and *Sound of the Mountain.* In a curious way, Naruse's melancholy temperament meshed perfectly with the post-war Japanese mood of malaise and defeat. At the same time, his film style achieved that mature austerity which was stripped of anything arbitrary.

Heretofore, due to his timidity or fatalism, he had made whatever pictures the studio asked of him. In 1951, however, all that changed when he tried his hand at adapting a work by a favorite author, Fumiko Hayashi. Hayashi's autobiographical, realist fiction about Tokyo's lower classes was material with which Naruse felt instantly comfortable. Interestingly, Hayashi died in 1951, the very year that Naruse attempted his first adaptation of her work: they apparently never met, but the

natural rapport between the disconsolate Naruse and the dead novelist produced one of the most successful collaborations in film history. He made six Hayashi adaptations—*Repast, Lightning, Wife, Late Chrysanthemums, Floating Clouds,* and a final, beautiful tribute to her, based on Hayashi's autobiography, *A Wanderer's Notebook.*

How was Naruse able to enter so deeply into a woman's point of view? What are we to make in general of the male director—such as Naruse, Cukor, Mizoguchi, Bergman, Ophuls, Stahl, Sirk, early Capra—who chooses again and again to tell a story through a woman's eyes? In the light of recent film criticism, it is not clear whether these artists should be regarded as proto-feminists, or reinforcers of gender mythology, or both. Along with factors of psychosexual identification (strongest perhaps in gay male directors) and class sympathies (women seen as an oppressed group), the "women's picture" directors of the thirties through fifties were also catering to a commercial market: so-called "weepies" or "three-hankie pictures" were conspicuously made with women's ticket-buying power in mind. (Too bad today's audiences feel so superior to this genre, and often laugh at the spectacle of intense suffering as though at a lapse in taste. This sophisticated giggling at the "datedness" of melodrama in women's pictures may be our own embarrassed confession of inadequacy before a lost, more sincere purity of heart).

Of the two great Japanese directors who specialized in feminine psychology, Mizoguchi and Naruse, Mizoguchi is apt to seem the more borderline-bathetic today, Naruse the more realistic. Both may have been working out their own guilt toward women in these empathetic portraits (Mizoguchi blamed himself for his wife's madness, after having given her a venereal disease; with Naruse, there was a waitress rumored to have committed suicide when he did not return her love). Certainly, both selected women as a good vehicle for embodying the Buddhist doctrine of worldly suffering. Mizoguchi's heroines seem not only noble but at times verging on masochistic, like the title character in *Life of Oharu* who gets sold into prostitution and suffers the gamut of degradations on her road to transcendence. Naruse's women are apt to be more aggressive and self-protective, falling a good deal short of the angelic. Naruse, in fact, was willing to go to audacious limits in risking an audience's sympathetic identification with a main character, preferring mixed types in the interests of psychological realism, like the somewhat cool bar hostess Keiko of *When a Woman Ascends the Stairs.*

Many Naruse heroines work in bars and geisha houses, where they are wrongly taken for prostitutes and have to fend off men who prey on momentary weaknesses—compromising situations where their character and integrity will be tested to the limit. Audie Bock has written about the Naruse women's "stubborn dedication to their own self-respect in the face of overwhelming crassness, vulgarity and exploitation . . . if they throw themselves away for a man, like Yukiko in Naruse's best-loved film in Japan, *Floating Clouds,* they do so with such a complete awareness that we cannot feel pity for them. . . . They refuse to give up in the face of emotional blankness on the part of a lover or insurmountable financial obstacles to a secure life. . . . Unlike Ozu's accepting protagonists or Mizoguchi's transcending heroines, Naruse's characters continue to question and to beat their heads against the wall."

The quintessential Naruse actress was Hideko Takamine, who had seventeen starring roles in the director's films, and who was certainly as important to Naruse's realization of his vision as was Fumiko Hayashi. This beautiful star has large, vulnerable, somewhat prideful eyes given to flashes of obstinancy and annoyance. It is interesting to contrast her with a seemingly more "classical" Japanese type, Setsuko Hara, the breathtaking "good girl" of many Ozu films like *Late Spring* (whom Naruse also used). Hara never stops smiling as she resists whatever does not suit her; Takamine rebels from the start, but with a weariness which suggests she knows she may have to give in eventually. In what is probably her greatest performance, the biographical film about Fumiko Hayashi, *A Wanderer's Notebook* (also called *Her Lonely Lane*), Takamine even succeeds in making herself look homely, curling her mouth into a sarcastic grimace as she threads her way through

Setsuko Hara, in SOUND OF THE MOUNTAIN

Hideko Takamine and Masayuki Mori: FLOATING CLOUDS

Tokyo's literary bohemia, sloughing off insults and condescension or retaliating when it suits her, contrarily falling in love with the wrong men. In all of Takamine's Naruse roles, her face shows so abjectly when she is fond of a man that the object of her desires starts taking her for granted right away. He would be wrong to think her easily gotten rid of, however, because a Takamine character in love can be quite a nuisance.

The perfect male partner for Takamine was Masayuki Mori, an actor Naruse used repeatedly, and who attained international reknown as the enchanted potter in Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu.* This very intelligent actor was called upon to play something of a heel in both *Floating Clouds* and *When A Woman Ascends The Stairs.* If he were merely a cad he would have no interest for us. But one always gets the feeling with Mori—or the role he plays in Naruse's films—that a part of him does understand a woman's needs and would even like to go along with her program, if only he could believe love was not an illusion. As often as he turns away a woman, something in him expresses reluctant sympathy for her—and that is perhaps the hook. Mori's face, full of sharp angles, has shades of disdain, self-doubt, gentleness and cruelty—a Japanese James Mason, in a sense. Elegant-looking even when his character has fallen on hard times, as in *Floating Clouds,* the sardonic Mori is finally worn down in that picture by Takamine's love. It is she, the "rejected one," who, as is often the case with unrequited love, proves the stronger. When Mori finally breaks down at her death-bed, in one of the most moving and uncharacteristically conclusive and tragic endings in Naruse, we sense that a man like him can only feel love in the form of pity and remorse.

Naruse's is an actor-oriented cinema, where no exotic angles or camera devices are allowed to distract from full concentration on the human drama. He has been justly celebrated as a great director of actresses, on a par with Mizoguchi. Thus, it comes as somewhat of a surprise to learn that he rarely coached his actors. Hideko Takamine has left us a funny reminiscence of her experience with the director: "Mr. Naruse was more than merely reticent; he was a person whose refusal to talk was downright malicious. Even during the shooting of a picture, he would never say if something was good or bad, interesting or trite. He was a completely unresponsive direc-

tor. I appeared in about twenty of his films, and yet there was never an instance in which he gave me any acting instructions. He never said anything, so it was always up to me to decide how to act on my own . . . It was at the start of principal photography on the film *Untamed* that I mustered all my courage and addressed a question to Mr. Naruse.

" 'How should I approach this role?'

" 'It'll be over before you know it.'

"This was all the answer I was to receive before he lapsed into his usual silence, and I was caught in my own trap. What a mean old man!"

And yet, Naruse's films are uncommonly well-acted. It is said that the great Carl Dreyer generated a sort of energy field around him; more important than any verbal advice was the way he would walk over to an actor and touch him on the shoulder, and the actor would know instinctively the right quality to bring to the lines. So it may be that Naruse, through his own stoical, uncommunicative manner on the set, generated a force field that was so strong that the actors could not help but fall into the right, desperate mood, expressing what has been called his "vision of entrapment."

Naruse disliked breaking in new coworkers; if an actor understood instinctively what he wanted, he would use him or her over and over again. Of the stock company that Naruse built up over the years, first mention should be made of Daisuke Kato, the roly-poly secondary who seems to pop up in every Naruse film after 1952, almost like a good-luck charm. It was the unprepossessing Kato's lot to play a man who is obviously unattractive to the woman he desires, but who hangs around, hoping against hope that she will get desperate enough to settle for him. Another Naruse regular was Haruko Sugimura, whom Ozu fans will recognize as the comically meddlesome "Auntie," but whom Naruse brings out in more womanly leading roles, as the once-seductive geisha in *Flowing,* or the ex-geisha turned moneylender in *Late Chrysanthemums.* It is something to see her counting money in the latter film, and sticking a wad efficiently into her kimono top. When her heart has been broken one last time by an old lover asking for money, she burns his photograph in a scene of chilling finality and accepts the platonic devotions of Daisuke Kato, who shares with her a passion for collecting rents.

Naruse made the key statement about his own aesthetics when he said, regarding his characters: "If they move a little, they quickly hit the wall." This point applies not only to psychology and plot, but to the physical environment in which the characters interact. It is a tight set; we come to know the rooms, and the walls (those walls against which his characters keep beating their heads) are never far. Naruse's films largely take place in interiors, with a good deal of lush, chocolatey black-and-white shadow which, however, does not obscure the telltale background details revealing of the status of the characters' pocketbooks.

Often we get a glimpse as well of the neighborhood, with its cheap tenements and noodle shops—usually a long shot of the street or alley where the characters dwell—shown once during the daytime, and once at night, with the lanterns glimmering in a smudged moody darkness.

Okamoto, a director who apprenticed with Naruse, testified to his master's extreme reluctance to get bogged down in elaborate location shots, preferring small crews and cheap solutions. "For example, when we were scouting locations in the city, the cinematographer asked, 'Is this where you'd like to shoot?' and held his hands out wide to indicate the intersection of two broad, busy avenues. I began to tally up rough estimates in my head: 50 or 60 extras, 5 or 6 automobiles, 10 traffic controllers would probably be needed. But then Mr. Naruse turned around in the opposite direction and squared his hands to indicate a narrow frame, 'Here will do.' It was the entrance to the subway. In this tight an area, we would only need two or three people to pass by the star, Hideko Takamine."

When we contrast this story with anecdotes about the imperious Mizoguchi demanding that a whole house be moved on the roadside to improve the background, or Ozu requiring that ceilings be built on all his sets, it is clear why studio chiefs came eventually to appreciate Naruse. He always brought his films in on time and even under budget. Audie Bock sees this unwillingness to ask for anything for

FLOWING: *Residents of the geisha house call for the maid to help charm the policeman*

himself as a "painful modesty" which held him back; and certainly, modesty is not a virtue we expect or reward in our modern artists. Yet one may also view it as pride of another kind, equally stubborn at its root as Mizoguchi's demands. It is also the difference between the directorial style that sets out to create a universe, and the one that has an almost superstitiously spiritual respect for reality as it is: between Antonioni painting the trees purple, and Rossellini not moving so much as a boulder out of the way.

In spite of his dislike of location shooting, we often do get a sense of the city (usually Tokyo) in which Naruse's characters live—quickly and over their shoulders. The viewpoint has nothing touristic or documentary about it: it is that of the thoroughly acclimatized urbanite, who takes the metropolis more or less for granted, while hurrying through errands. In that respect the city is all the more convincingly and, as it were, lovingly portrayed: it does not have to be milked for "colorfulness."

One privileged location, used by Naruse so often it amounts to a signature, is the bridge or overpass. Here his protagonists repair, midway or two-thirds through the story, to hash out their problems. These overpass sequences function as a kind of narrative resting-point. The lyrical movement from confining interiors to open air, and the sudden elevation above the city, release an appetite for perspective, both physical and emotional. But the promenade often turns into a nervous pacing back and forth, reinforcing the awareness that there is no easy way out of the trap.

A case could be made for Naruse as a formalist on the level of Ozu and Mizoguchi, provided we begin to understand how his psychological genius translates into cinematic terms: as an art of discreet, subtle, and *tactful* interventions. Each timing of a cut, each composition, each camera placement and movement of Naruse's reveals an absolutely reliable intelligence. Sometimes the sense of discretion is exquisite indeed, as when the heroine in *When A Woman Ascends The Stairs* reluctantly begins climbing the steps to her bar hostess job, and the camera tracks, for less than two seconds, a close-up of her feet. In *Floating Clouds* there is a haunting memory-sequence of Indochina, lit more brightly than the rest of the film and with a "Bolero"-like musical figure behind it, which depicts the couple's first sexual attraction (long since outgrown by the man, but not the woman). It functions as a denial of transience: once something is real in the past, it can never be dismissed. In this film Naruse also repeats a peculiar formal device every time the man and woman walk together. He tracks them in long

shot, then moves the camera in for a closer, more languid tracking shot: this movement becomes the metaphor of the couple's true connection, in spite of the man's denial or the arguments of the moment.

Another example might be taken from *Late Chrysanthemums,* during a painful train station scene where an ex-geisha is seeing off her son, the one person she cares about in the world. The compositions have been very constrained, in line with the mood of loss and betrayal. But there is a sudden widening of the angle as a pair of new, young geisha pass by, and the middle-aged ex-geisha and her friend examine the girls' coiffure. On the one hand, it recalls the bitter shortness of a career based on fleshly beauty; on the other hand, the veterans seem to take pride in their ability to evaluate the nuances of fashion. Then the camera pulls back further still and we are given the whole train station, which has the effect of a breathtaking opening up. Cut to an overpass with the city behind. The two faded ex-geisha are clopping along in their clogs, when they are passed by a woman with a pronounced wiggle. One geisha imitates the walk exaggeratedly, trying to remember the name of the new American movie sensation who has inspired it. "Marilyn Monroe!" she recalls with satisfaction, and the film ends as they continue clopping along with their backs to us. It is a singularly slight way to "resolve" such a somber movie—yet an ending perfectly in keeping with Naruse's sensibility, which fights shy of any resounding conclusions.

It has been said, by Audie Bock, that "There are no happy endings for Naruse, but there are incredibly enlightened defeats." A beautiful sentence, and only partly true. Actually, there are cheerful notes struck in the tentative reconciliation between mother and daughter in *Lightning,* the boyish somersaults in *The Whole Family Works,* the young couple's happiness in *Wife, Be Like a Rose,* the accepted pregnancy in *Husband and Wife,* the wife's return to her husband in *Repast,* leaning against his shoulder in the train, and other bittersweet closures. Perhaps the most ambiguous and radical ending of Naruse's occurs in *Flowing,* a delicate, absorbing chamber work about the decline of a geisha house. For the last several minutes the film goes completely without dialogue, alternating shots of the daughter practicing her sewing machine upstairs, the geisha mother supervising her samisen pupils downstairs, the elderly maid going about her business—until one realizes with a shock that this is it, the drama is not going to come to any point; we are left with the image of life streaming or "flowing" through the characters, the rooms, the evening, the river. It is a passage as modern, as contrapuntally abstract, as Resnais's *Muriel* or the finale of Antonioni's *The Passenger.*

There is a tendency in Naruse criticism to interpret the director's penchant for inconclusive endings, his very eschewal of tragic dénouement, as evidence of an even bleaker pessimism. With this I cannot agree; nor can I go along with assessments of Naruse as an arch-nihilist. For instance, Anderson and Richie state: "Naruse's view of the world, if one of the most consistent, is also one of the least comforting. Mizoguchi may show us that in beauty lies salvation; . . . Ozu may take away everything, but he at least leaves his people the solace of each other's company. Naruse, however, believes there is no escape. We are in a floating world which has no meaning for us. If we are fortunate we die. If not, we must go on and on." I do not see why the stoical endurance of Naruse's characters is so bereft of meaning, nor what, if anything, robs *them* of the solace of each other's company. However, Bock also speaks of "the terrifying statement of all of Naruse's work," and, comparing him also to Mizoguchi and Ozu, calls him "the most withdrawn and the most clinical, and consequently, the one with the darkest view of life."

One needs to take with a grain of salt the contemporary critical tendency to validate a work of art by calling it "dark," "darker" or "darkest." Understandably, defenders of Naruse want to stake out a separate territory for him, but perhaps we do him a disservice by exaggerating his pessimism. In any case, is "pessimism" even the correct word, if all that we mean is a rejection of that sugar-coating of conventional cheerfulness, equivalent to self-satisfaction over nothing real? Freud once said that he was trying to bring his patients from hysterical misery to ordinary unhappiness. Naruse's characters certainly know

about ordinary unhappiness, but to the degree that they regularly fight clear of hysterical misery and hold on to a dazed integrity, finding momentary compensations, satisfactions and tradeoffs along the way, I find his movies rather comforting. This is in addition to the satisfactions of experiencing such poised, well-executed art.

The key to the restorative, consoling power of Naruse's films lies in their evenness. A sense of balance and peace radiates from Naruse's own calm attitude that all these troubles have their rightful place in the world. It was this very even tempo which once made a studio head complain that he found Naruse's films "monotonous," lacking dramatic highs and lows, just as it may have caused Noël Burch to say that "only such extreme films as Naruse's postwar *Mother* really achieve the 'void'" of "no dramatic conflict or underlying movement." Whether Burch means this as a compliment or insult, it is simply untrue: that particular film depicts several family deaths, a romance, an expected proposal that is disappointed, the giving up of a child for adoption, the growing isolation of the widowed mother, and the teenage daughter's final wrenching, maturing insight that she will never understand what is going on in her mother's head. Perhaps what is meant by a "void" or absence of dramatic conflict refers simply to the quiet, methodical pace, and the equal weight given to everyday ordinary events and tragic ones.

Naruse carried on until 1969, when he died of cancer. The last movie he made, *Scattered Clouds,* is one of his strangest and strongest. It is eerie to see how well the old director's style fitted the mode of the late sixties; how curiously modernist it looks in CinemaScope, with its cool, restrained colors and spare compositions; how suitable his theme was to the Age of Alienation, though it is only Naruse's old song: this is how people keep scheming to get a little of what they want in a world designed for their unhappiness.

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NOTE: Audie Bock is preparing a book-length study of Naruse's work. A short version was published in French by the Locarno International Film Festival in 1983, and a program booklet, *Mikio Naruse, a Master of the Japanese Cinema,* is available for $5.00 from Film Center, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Columbus Drive at Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, IL 60603.

Naruse with Kinuyo Tanaka and Kyōko Kagawa, celebrating the release of MOTHER

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Reviews

BRAZIL

Director: Terry Gilliam. Script: Gilliam, Tom Stoppard, and Charles McKeown. Music: Michael Kamen. Photography: Roger Pratt. Universal.

During the long-awaited year 1984 a veritable deluge of articles, books, talks, speeches and more were given over to discussion ad nauseam of Orwell's book and prophecies. *Nineteen Eight Four* became the province, in 1984, of a battle for the most prevalent interpretation of totalitarian society—whose resembles it more, "theirs" or "ours": the USSR or the USA. It should have surprised no one that most leftist accounts attempted to tabulate the qualities of life in America in the eighties that clearly showed capitalism as finally having achieved Orwellian thought control—TV, governmental newspeak, powerless manipulated masses, big science. The right, meanwhile, redoubled its efforts at painting the Soviet Union in the drabbest of greys, with police helmets atop the dour heads of half the population stomping across the supine bodies of the other half.

What a relief, then, that Terry Gilliam's *Brazil,* the following year, rose above the general soporific level of that ideological fray to propose for us a critical vision of the world at once more sophisticated than Orwell's and more challenging to its audience—a work perhaps doomed to lesser status in cultural history for these very reasons. For while *Nineteen Eighty Four,* within Orwell's intent, may with some legitimacy be claimed by both left and right as "proof" of the politics of each, *Brazil*'s critique of our world, in its ambiguities and twilit despair, is not so easily digestible. There can be no doubt that the main fire in this movie is trained toward bureaucratic consumer capitalism. And yet its portrayal of a working class irrelevant and oblivious to the horrors of everyday life under an authoritarian regime leaves little room for socialists to claim the film as their own. What, then, is *Brazil*?

Referring years later to his second film, *Before the Revolution,* Bertolucci said, "We all misunderstood Brecht at that time." Maybe it took Godard's explorations in political cinema of the late sixties and early seventies to clear away the lingering ghost of the German playwright for modern left wing filmmakers. Godard's emphasis on the author's end of things proved, if nothing else, that a popular cinema demands popular means, even if an *ultimate* goal remains the subversion and destruction of its own illusionistic devices. The closest Godard ever came to realizing such a balance in his work was arguably *Tout va bien;* while Bertolucci swung back to self-confessed bourgeois film-making in *1900* to communicate the PCI's schematic appraisal of Italian events. Ten years later, building on the experiments of *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life* and *Time Bandits,* Terry Gilliam has produced in *Brazil* his variant of Brechtian cinema for the eighties. But this political film-maker's worldview comes across with substantial differences from his predecessors, whose working-class focus and optimism have given way in Gilliam's work before certain stark truths about late capitalist culture.

Brazil is a tragicomedy about the relationship between imagination and fantasy, and about the ability of a society ("somewhere in the 20th century," as the opening sequence informs us) to constantly transform the energy of the former into the dead weight of the latter. Excellent performances by the principal actors abets the direction by Gilliam, which in places falls short of the brilliant writing by Gilliam, Tom Stoppard, and Charles McKeown. The structure of the film's plot is relatively simple, even if the plot itself—and everything else about the film—is extraordinarily complex. Sam Lowry (Jonathan Pryce), who works in a giant bureaucracy (the Ministry of Information) escapes from his feelings of guilt and the oppressive tedium of his life through fantasizing. When Jill, the woman of his dreams (Kim Greist), shows up in real life and turns out to be a suspected terrorist, he jeopardizes his job and then his existence in wooing her. The narrative of Sam's day-to-day reality, and the story of his gradual fall, is periodically interrupted by his flights of fancy. When Sam is finally arrested to be tortured, a commando team of rescuers pulls him to safety, and he escapes to the country with Jill. But it's just another fantasy; the last scene reveals him alone in the torture cham-

ber, its vast space filling with the clouds of his dreams, and the soundtrack with the 1939 song "Brazil" segueing into the rhythms of carnival or the credits.

The "space" of this film defies temporality: not just literally, as in the hero's fantasies, lifting him from daily drudgery into the false liberated zones of his psyche's wish-fulfillment, but in the metaphoric creation of a simultaneous past/future, itself the work of imagination posing its alternative to fantasy precisely because of how it resembles—tantalizingly—something in the shape of our present. Unlike most of the hi-tech dreck mini-genres to which *Brazil* bears superficial resemblance, this film doesn't rely on the stock sci-fi device of future-discussing-present to speak of our own world. Instead, it lifts just enough from post-*Star Wars* cinematic technique to present the initial appearance of futuristic genre plays —only the better to undercut those conventions with numerous startling reversals of plot, character, theme, and expectation. The *Bladerunner*esque monumentalism of the buildings, for instance, resolves, upon closer examination, into faithful reproductions of thirties fascist architecture.

In fact, all manner of thirties and forties visual imagery predominates, from architecture to technology, in references to popular culture of the period like Chaplin's *Great Dictator,* the Marx Brothers, and *Casablanca,* as well as the title song. World War II-style posters in the distinctive mold of the Englishman Abram Games help set the social atmosphere of the world in which Sam dwells ("Don't Suspect a Friend—Report Him!").[1]

Sam's fantasy imagery owes much to Nazi suggestion, as well; his armor and soaring wings recall the Hitler posters "The Flag Bearer" and "Germany Lives!";[2] and the opening scenes of the film, amid billowing stratospheric clouds, quote Riefenstahl's beginning for *Triumph of the Will.* The terrifying scenes of police bursting into apartments and capturing suspected enemies of the state lift the central element of Ben Shahn's poster, produced for the Office of War Information in 1942, "This is Nazi Brutality," with its semi-surreal hooded prisoner about to be shot.[3] Even cutesy machines, like the camera eye on extender arms that could be an Industrial Light and Magic effect, are vastly outnumbered by a profusion of post-World War I office machines, in which the ubiquitous computer-video screens find themselves embedded. The portmanteau past/future technologies, while adding their own weight to the between-wars visual style, also, curiously, provide a clue to deciphering the Oedipus play within the social drama, the other side of Gilliam's vision.

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Lowry's fantasies take on increasing amounts of restrictive, disturbing baggage after the first, joyous Dedaelus ride above the clouds. Standing between him and his amour is a metallic samurai warrior, towering over Lowry, disappearing instantly as Lowry charges it, its own glittering armor and weapon more massive and threatening than poor Sam's. The warrior is but one of several fathers for Lowry, struggling within his unconscious to come to terms with his felt oppression and life that would be empty were it not filled with something worse. Macabre guilt-creatures show up in his fantasies following his abortive visit to the widow Mrs. Buttle's apartment, her husband tortured to death over a bureaucratic error. All his dreams likewise perfectly reflect social realities that he refuses to face directly. Each dream has its material antecedents carefully placed within the narrative, material in two senses: the mundane everyday material of people and things transformed, condensed, etc.; and the film's gradually accumulating *material analysis* of the psychological relationship between the individual Lowry and the oppressive social structures arrayed against (and internalized by) him.

Why does Lowry fantasize? The film poses three unavoidable reasons: the dead weight of

meaningless or immoral work; the stultifying leisure of a parasitic consumerist culture; and his familial burden of guilt and Oedipal anguish, as personified by the various fathers (Kurtzmann, Helpmann, the actual absent father, the samurai), but more importantly, by Mother. Authority and power relentlessly foist themselves on poor Everyman Sam wherever he turns. It's no surprise he begins to confuse them in his inner life when in fact they share a great many characteristics. Work, leisure, dreams: he literally has nowhere to go.

Lowry thinks he has only dreamt his fantasy woman. In fact he has dreamt his mother, whose overbearing intrusion into his life takes many forms. But his dream woman also actually exists, as her own person, and as someone who is quite different—active, capable, thoughtful—than he has fantasized. The dual history of Sam's relationship to Jill/mother unites, ultimately, beneath the signifier of the same actress.

This part of *Brazil* reproduces in psychological miniature the two worlds in which Lowry dwells. Just as his real world is a condensation of historical fascism with the consumerist present—an iron past in a velvet glove—his fantasy life, apparently soaring freely in the skies inside his mind, actually revolves around his reaction to and internal transformation of that fearful authoritarian world into emotional symbols, rendered the more powerful through combination with the authoritative material of his mother.

Gilliam presents this world as in large part an historical regression, the fast and loose play with technological eras one aspect of a more generalized picture of decay masquerading as progress. Mother, through surgical treatments that the very rich can afford, regresses too: growing younger and younger as the story unfolds. Her best friend, undergoing similar treatments with another doctor, keeps suffering "complications," which by the end of the film have killed her. She is the Dorian Gray portrait of Mother; her painfully shy daughter, preserving symmetry, mirrors Sam as the emotionally crippled child of a rich woman. The maître d' at Mother's favorite restaurant almost doesn't recognize her; by the time Sam attends a party at her penthouse she has men younger than him fawning over her. When Sam makes love to Jill in his mother's bed it is unclear, for a moment, with whom he frolics. (He does announce, in a neat reversal, that he has just "killed" Jill in Helpmann's office. The pieces are all there, but a little jumbled.) During his last, long fantasy, however, the relationship between Jill and Mother as signifiers in Sam's internal universe finally becomes explicit, perhaps because Sam now too has achieved a regressive apotheosis, the culmination of all his fantasizing.

After escaping the torturer's chair and blowing up the MOI, Lowry runs up a ramp into a huge building, its columns semicircled around it with the aid of a wide angle lens in gathering darkness. Lowry, with subjective camera, faces two doors, large crosses on each (Chaplin's "double-cross" from *The Great Dictator*). The screen is nearly filled by the unctuous face of the maître d' from the restaurant; he ushers Sam/us into a bizarre funeral service for Lowry's mother's friend, who finally has succumbed to her "complications." Her picture is on the wall, and her coffin rotates slowly on a dais as a minister drones on. We see the back of Mother, a circle of young male admirers clustered around her. Lowry runs to her, calling out "Mother!" She turns, and it's the face of Jill, Mother's treatments having apparently brought her to this. Sam continues to cry out to her until the funeral service is interrupted by the arrival of the police. Sam overturns the coffin and a gelatinous skeleton spills out onto the floor. He dives into the coffin, falling through blackness. Landing in the street, in familiar nightmarish terrain from his earlier fantasies, he is pursued by hideous baby-masked creatures (some pushing shopping carts covered with coffins) onto a pile of ducts, to a blank wall. They move forward toward him. Miraculously his hand finds a knob. He turns it and steps inside the door, closing it against the onrushing creatures. We hear a motor. He's inside the prefab house Jill had tried to deliver before, on the trailer of Jill's truck. They drive through the night, and by morning we see their rig parked in the green countryside. The camera tracks back and up, into the sky, the earth unrolling in all directions, music swelling triumphantly.

The last fantasy, particularly Sam's condensation of Jill with his mother's regressive movement to her lost youth, tears the veil off

Lowry's oedipal secret: his Icarus dreams, grounded, are only so much infantile mother-lust. His fantasy escape from work drudgery and controlled consumption—potentially understandable as liberation, albeit brief, from the world he hates—in fact only brings him back onto the personal/historical tracks of his psyche, which run in a circle.

Earlier in the film Sam and Jill drive up a road away from the oil fields where she has picked up a package, which Sam fears is a bomb. The highway is lined with billboards so closely packed together that from the road one cannot catch any glimpse of the devastated industrial landscape on the other side. Lowry's belief in his fantasies parallels the road: blinders presented as liberation.

The last long fantasy sequence ostensibly settles accounts with "father," as displaced from Helpmann into the building and institution that he runs, the MOI. All the structures of arbitrary authority, irrationalist logic and brutality are condensed and blown sky-high. Better, the samurai has been replaced with a more accurately symbolized figure for Sam's oppression. Sam is then able to go and resolve his relationship, similarly, with mother in the funeral service. But at high cost: experincing his death diving through the vagina/coffin. When he comes out the other side of his trip through the underworld he is enabled finally to escape with Jill and live the fantasy through to its conclusion. But as Helpmann ironically comments, "He got away from us"—an escape that leaves them alive and Lowry dead.

The message can be read, typically for this film, at least two ways. Either the possibilities to change things, both for the individual and society, are nil; or—and I think the preponderant weight of *Brazil*'s evidence rests in this direction—change is possible only if it is attempted outside the ideological terms dictated by oppressive social structures. This means, with Lowry's fate the alternative, steering clear of the everpresent temptation to fantasize one's way toward a solution.

Brazil's world is a nightmarish synthesis of Marx's critique of capitalism and the worst fears of Freud about human potential in history. The Frankfurt School's classic analyses of fascism in the thirties and forties explored the dialectic of social forces and psychic response, with the initial revolutionary impulse of their studies ultimately tailing off into the terrible sense of humanity having reached an historical blind alley. The Marxist-Freudian analysis of such thinkers around the school as Wilhelm Reich, Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin remained as sharp-edged as any social critique of the time. But their work could not recapture the optimism of the earlier generations of Marxism, and for good reason. The Frankfurt vision was informed by the experiences of the twenties and thirties: failed revolutions in Western Europe, decline of mass participation and bureaucratization of the Russian Revolution; a capitalism in deep crisis but with a working class too numbed by unemployment and hunger, on one side, and rising Fordist consumerism, on the other, to do anything with the opportunity.

Brazil unites the understanding of these social forces of the period and the psychological responses called into being by them in its grim story. The result, more Benjamin than Brecht, is nonetheless not completely without hope. This single ray of light emanates from the relationship set up between imagination and fantasy in the film.

Imagination might be defined as the ability to project something other than what is, in such a way as to be able to realize the image in reality. It is a hopeful response and alternative to the external pressure of social oppression. Fantasy, as poor second choice, is the ghost of imagination strangled, where one's own felt oppression is turned inward and relief sought helplessly in images shaped by that oppression. The opening scene of the film sets the stage for this dichotomous paradigm: the Riefenstahl quote opens up the territory of fascist imagery for exploration by the story, the scene shifting from the sky to high inside the lobby of the MOI, moving down the statue of an iron eagle to its base, where a woman slaps a little boy in front of the statue's motto: "The truth shall make you free."

The narrative expression of this difference between imagination and fantasy can be illuminated by the opposition utopia/dystopia. *Brazil* is almost entirely dystopic, to be sure. But it asks us to consider the *sources* of dystopia through distancing devices: filmic quotes, wrenching narrative reversals, Walter Mitty structuring, and some particularly effec-

tive uses of music. In the scene where Jill and Sam finally kiss in his mother's apartment, the moment is heralded by loud "Hollywood romance" music bursting onto the soundtrack, its intent impossible through exaggeration to miss. And at the end of the film, following the revelation that Sam's escape was another fantasy, the music of carnival gives us, for the first time, a direct reference to the country Brazil, posing the question, why now? The distancing devices compel us to seek relief in imagining *something different,* if for no other reason than because the choice between reality and fantasy—as offered by Sam's example—is so brutally limited.

The last scene, lingering on through the credits, sums up the argument of the film. The visual presentation of Sam dwarfed by the immense torture chamber, the room filling with the clouds of his/Riefenstahl's dreams, graphically charts the individual's capitulation to the torture chamber of society, even—especially—in the very moment of attempting a private escape through fantasy. The expressionist externalizing of internal spaces, which in turn have been absorbed from public fantasy, or ideology—here exposes the simple fact that fantasy stands in the way of imagination.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about *Brazil* is its internal consistency and coherence. Each of the parts fit together in a seamless symbolic universe, where more important than exact relationships between them is their simple copresence. Throughout *Brazil* the images accumulate without Gilliam forcing their connection: and yet they connect. The food in the restaurant is delivered in small piles of colored mush, with a photograph attached to the plate of what the dish is supposed to be: steak, seafood, etc. Rich people become young again through surgery, although sometimes the treatment has 'complications.' Billboards lining the road block out the view of a gutted landscape. Screens are thrown up around the horribly wounded people in restaurants and department stores after terrorist bombings, so that the consumers can continue with their consumption undisturbed. Mrs. Buttle signs the proferred forms, accepting a receipt for her husband whom she knows will never return. Worse, Sam's old friend Jack (Michael Palin, another Monty Python alumnus) has moved beyond passive acceptance to active complicity with the terrorist state regime. And Lowry creates his own world, made up of elements of the real one that are themselves created for people like him. Again and again the power of fantasy to block out a painful reality and provide an ersatz substitute for imagination seems to offer a solution, even as its fateful passivity prevents the imaginative activity that could address the problem.

Gilliam has a knack, inherited from Monty Python, of taking older media materials and reworking them into "something completely different." The old gag of the boss turning his back for a moment, allowing the workers to goof off, is replayed with Kurtzmann inside his office, aware that everyone is watching *Casablanca* on their computer/video screens. He can *hear* the sound of hundreds of monitors thundering out the lines of the movie; when he wrenches open the door and locks out, all is business as usual. More than the gag, which is well-timed, is how it fits the film's argument. Collectively responding to their meaningless jobs sorting information, the workers in the MOI stage a little revolt as soon as the boss provides them with the opportunity. What seems to be rebellion—and it *is,* at one level—ultimately loops back to the advantage and continuity of the system as an entirety, for this remains a harmless revolt, a diversion from any more direct confrontation with the forces in power.

Lowry, by contrast, daydreams himself into incessant engagement with the mythic embodiments of evil power. His idyllic flights in the clouds are interrupted by giant corporate monoliths thrusting out of the ground, separating him and Jill; by brick-covered hands and face of a giant animated Kurtzman, erupting from the street, holding him back from flying; and most insistently, the huge samurai, another reference, perhaps, to thirties fascism, but also a seemingly invincible male power, barely human, another combination of past (feudal Japan) with future (all metal). Tellingly, the very moment of Lowry's triumph over the evil warrior occurs as he is busy getting himself clubbed into unconsciousness in his ill-considered attempt to rescue Jill in the department store. Here the function of his

fantasies becomes painfully clear: it provides him with just enough subjective resistance to state terror that he reveals himself, and becomes its object.

Two characters represent the possibility for a more effective resistance, Jill and Tuttle. Jill sees through the machinations of the state bureaucracy and the myriad ideological systems it utilizes because she cares—without becoming maudlin—about human beings. This puts her into direct conflict with the worldview and practices of nearly everyone around her. Her query to Sam, "How many terrorists have you ever actually seen?" stops him in his tracks, because he has never questioned the incessant propaganda from the media about terrorism, nor, for that matter, about anything else. His individual resistance is so privatized that no relationship has evolved in his mind between his personal frustrations and the real world. Jill's conscious distance from the 'common sense' of their society leads her to try to comfort Mrs. Buttle when her husband is mistakenly carried off by the police, and to attempt redress with the bureaucracy. Her efforts earn her a large file in Jack's office and official suspicion of terrorism.

Tuttle (Robert de Niro), a former Central Services worker, now has a file himself as a "freelance subversive." His hostility to paperwork led him to operate on his own, tapping people's phonecalls and discovering when they needed help with their omnipresent ducts ("Why a duck?"). Unfortunately his well-intentioned assistance in unofficially repairing Sam's ducts—based on the slogan he repeats to Sam a couple of times "We're all in this together"—brings down on Sam the vicious enmity of the sadistic Central Services workers, who savage his apartment, running ducts out of the walls and through all his rooms, lowering the temperature to freezing and finally forcing him out of his home. Sam's revenge against them, effected by Tuttle, notably does not bring him back his apartment, and is of a piece with the ineffectiveness of Tuttle's flashy, swashbuckling adventures (played with madcap abandon by de Niro).

Jill and Tuttle come closest of all the characters in *Brazil* to possessing something resembling imagination, and together spin one of the three slim, fragile threads of hope in the film. Their differences with the culture at large lead them to action against its excesses. Unhappily neither comes particularly close to success, Jill's efforts on Mrs. Buttle's behalf running afoul of the Kafkaesque rules of the bureaucracy, and Tuttle's good works undone by the Central Service workers. Even in Sam's climactic fantasy Tuttle loses, done in by the papers he fled Central Services to avoid.

Nowhere does the film offer explanation of their failure directly, lending substance to the sense that the film finally holds out nothing beyond despair for its audience. But one may infer that their failure is that of the individual response to a collective problem, to a social structure capable of absorbing or neutralizing individual revolts. Several times we see a billboard, looking like the famous billboard in the photo from Depression America with a happy family driving in their car, a breadline stretched out below it. The slogan, each time we see the sign in *Brazil,* is obscured. Only during Sam's false flight from the torture chamber we are allowed to read the slogan, which turns out to be Tuttle's "We're all in this together."

The high point of hope in the narrative occurs when the commandos led by Tuttle rescue Sam. Even before we learn that Sam has only dreamt the entire episode several clues warn us to beware: the dozen or so rescuers are gradually cut to ribbons; the worker in the MOI lobby pays no attention to the fierce struggle, and is killed herself in the crossfire; and Tuttle himself, wrapped in paper, is "disappeared" after apparently blowing up the MOI. Without the assistance of the working class, armed struggle against the authoritarian state is futile, a positive lesson as well as a moment of despair in the story. The lesson is underlined by the quote, during the scenes inside the MOI lobby, from *Potemkin,* i.e., an historical moment when armed revolt succeeded for the same reasons.

The third hopeful sign in *Brazil* is curiously Sam's fantasies, precisely through clearly demonstrating the impotence of his dream life and its complicity with fascist culture. The graphically negative example of Sam; the moral resistance of Jill and Tuttle; and the electrifying collective rescue, for one moment: these are the small redemptions of *Brazil's*

dark worldview, which together breach the despair with some photons of hope.

Whether all these levels of meaning make it from screen to audience is a matter of conjecture, one that I'll propose a glib answer to: not likely. But the virtue of Gilliam's approach is in how he constructs many doorways for his audience. The film can be enjoyed as a visual extravaganza, with the aid of a special effects budget that must have made the former Monty Python cut-out animator very happy; as post-modern stylizing; as a dystopia in the tradition of *Metropolis, Nineteen Eighty Four, Bladerunner* and the like; as existential nightmare like Kafka's *The Trial;* as a black comedy—the list could go on indefinitely because it's all there. Once inside Gilliam's film, however, the same sense of hypnotic fascination seems to capture each member of the audience, no matter how they arrived. And this ultimately means that something in the vision of *Brazil* reverberates with the late capitalist experience, the subjectivity that engages with urban vastness, with faceless bureaucracy, with the moral decay accompanying the commodification of all social relationships—and with the individual's daily efforts to cope with it all.

Lowry's confused rejection of the social norm is based on a healthy impulse. Unluckily for him, so powerful is the enemy that it can even control the forms of revolt against it, channeling their aberrations like the arrow-straight road lined with advertisements concealing the devastated landscape behind it. If *Brazil* offers any answer to this impasse, it is in the segue of the song at the end into the sounds of carnival, the moment when the film's title finally reveals its significance: the utopian promise of the festival, which breaks down the innumerable barriers of everyday reality in the name of joyous celebration, which deliberately confuses appearances and reality through the ruse of the mask, the great social leveller, so that appearance and reality may be posed as a direct question; and which gives license to break free of social constraint so that desire and its object can find one another, if only for one transcendent moment. Carnival, the structuring absence of *Brazil,* defines the imagination and its power suffusing every frame of a film about its fantasy-ridden other, our daily lives. —FRED GLASS

NOTES

1. Rhodes, Anthony, *Propaganda, The Art of Persuasion: World War II,* 1976, Chelsea House Publishers, pp. 124–128.
2. Rhodes, p. 43–4.
3. Rhodes, p. 171.

The distinction "imagination/fantasy" is elaborated nicely in Stephen Robinson's "The Art of the Possible," *Radical Science* 15, Oct. 1984.

SHOAH

A film by Claude Lanzmann. New Yorker Films.

Shoah (the Hebrew word for annihilation) is a nine and a half hour documentary on the Holocaust culled from 350 hours of film. Like the event it commemorates, the film overwhelms with its enormity. This is not so much a function of its length as of the vastness of its conception, the accumulation of facts, and the breadth of people and places documented.

Despite the deluge of books and films which have appeared on the subject, *Shoah* differs from all that has come before, even though almost everything related by the film's multiple speakers is knowledge already known. What *Shoah* accomplishes is a total immersion into another reality. Director Claude Lanzmann achieves this through piling detail on detail, by repetition, by allowing subjects open-ended time to tell their story, by claustrophobic close-ups, and by the film's circular structure. Together these create a cumulative effect both chilling and numbing; the film takes days to reach its full impact.

Like Alain Resnais's masterful *Night and Fog,* one of the great documentaries on the same subject, *Shoah* deals with memory—the desire to forget, the need to remember. However, while *Night and Fog* is structured on contrast—then/now, black-and-white/color, archival footage/present-day footage, the death factories then/the deserted buildings now, *Shoah* tends to collapse the past into the present, blurring the distinctions, making the past come alive again, making the past part of the present.

Like many previous films on the Holocaust (Lanzmann dislikes the term because of its implication of natural disaster and because it has been appropriated for so many other situations), *Shoah* covers all of the major events —the ghettoization of the Jews, the transport

dark worldview, which together breach the despair with some photons of hope.

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trains, the death camps, the Warsaw Uprising, and the lack of world response. However, the film is not a chronological rendering of this tragic chapter of world history; rather it is a meditation on its subject.

The film opens in Chelmo, Poland, the site of one of the Nazi extermination camps, and ends with an image of a train, one of the hundreds which served to carry Jewish victims to their death. (The train becomes one of the repeated images which Lanzmann returns to over and over again. As Lanzmann has commented elsewhere, without the trains the mechanism of destruction could not have functioned.) Between the opening and closing, Lanzmann weaves together interviews with camp survivors, with Poles who witnessed these events, and with Nazis who abetted the process. Each relates the story from his own perspective. Connecting the interviews are two types of passages: restless pans and tracks of the camps today and images of the endless railway cars. Those interludes serve in part to break the monotony of wall-to-wall talking heads, although experientially they serve three other purposes.

First, the sight of present-day Treblinka and Auschwitz comes as a shock. Where one might expect barren ground or poisoned rivers (nature's response to the blood that soaked the ground and the ashes that swelled the waters), the landscape is incredibly beautiful, lush and serene. This fact produces its own irony and philosophic response. Second, these scenes, interposed between the tales of horror, allow time for reflection and meditation. In this respect they function like the peopleless "pillow" insert shots of an Ozu film.

Third, in some instances Lanzmann carries the voice of his subject over the scenes of the camps: as one sees the looming gas chamber of Treblinka, or the now empty unloading ramps at Asuchwitz and Sobibor, one visualizes the original traumas. Yet nowhere does Lanzmann use archival material—all of the footage was filmed in the last six years. The film's greatness is in its ability to make each viewer recreate the events. Lanzmann rejected films of the period on the grounds that they have become too familiar and have thus lost some of their impact, and because none actually showed the death camps—the true subject of this work.

SHOAH: *Filip Muller, survivor of Auschwitz*

The main body of *Shoah* is composed of the interviews. Here Lanzmann proves himself a dogged historian, an obsessed chronicler and a masterful technician. He puts to work all of the knowledge gleaned from his background in philosophy and journalism. As a protégé of Jean-Paul Sartre, he edited *Les Temps modernes.* Committed to the notion that one moves from the concrete to the abstract, Lanzmann never asks big questions such as "How could this happen?" Rather, by the piling of fact on fact, detail on detail, he leads us slowly to our own conclusions. As Lanzmann has commented, "If you answer completely to the how, the answer to the why is absolutely included."*

The interviews seem incredibly simple, sometimes even trivial. Yet always there is a point. For instance, in talking with a group of Poles who now live in Chelmo where 400,000 Jews were gassed (and two survived), he begins his conversation in the present by discussing their home. He compliments a couple on their house. They smile and laugh, as do many of his subjects. He comments on the carvings on the door. It is revealed that these were done by Jewish craftsmen. Casually, Lanzmann presses them to talk about the Jews who used to live there. We learn specifics: the Jews lived in the homes on the square; the Poles lived behind in the homes where the privies were. But we also learn about attitudes —then and now. The women remember how the Polish men adored the Jewish women. Why? Because they were beautiful. Why were they beautiful? Because they didn't work like the Polish women. Why didn't they work?

*Interview by author with Claude Lanzmann on January 10, 1986.

Because they were rich. And so it goes. Slowly all is revealed. And throughout, Lanzmann never challenges, never moralizes. He just listens. No voice ever attempts to put things in perspective. It is not necessary. Subjects condemn themselves. We understand "how it could happen." We also see how anti-Semitism can survive even without Jews.

What is also intriguing is Lanzmann's decision to leave much of the initial conversations with his subjects, which at first only seem necessary as a warm-up period. But he is right; this footage goes a long way to answer our questions about how he managed to convince people to speak so openly, how he disarmed them. Likewise, there are long, seemingly awkward sequences where Lanzmann asks his questions in French, his interpreter translates into Polish, the interviewee responds in Polish and this is then translated back into French. (Lanzmann is fluent in French, German and English, but uses a translator for Polish, Hebrew and Yiddish). No doubt for some viewers the whole process is unnecessarily tedious, yet Lanzmann refuses to cut into the scene. But such a technique allows the viewer to concentrate on other things—most especially nonverbal communication, the facial expressions and gestures of his subjects. And this opportunity is rewarding. For often these extreme close-ups reveal contradictions between what is said and what is left unspoken.

Lanzmann's integrity (or lack thereof) is most apparent in his interviews with the second set of subjects—the former Nazis. The fact that he was able to gain access to these men is a small miracle and he has admitted to lying to gain their confidence. Lanzmann worked on *Shoah* for ten years and he often spent years tracking down these men and convincing them to talk with him. One key subject, Franz Suchomel, SS Unterscharführer at Treblinka, was filmed clandestinely with a hidden camera. Yet Lanzmann openly shows us the white van in which he hid the recording equipment and even leaves in his false assurance to Suchomel not to use his name. For Lanzmann, history comes first.

In contrast to the Poles, Lanzmann does not talk about attitudes or feelings. Here he concentrates solely on details. What was the lay-out of the camp? What time did the trains arrive? How many people arrived in an average train? And most appallingly, how long did it take from their arrival to the disposal of the ashes? (Answer: three hours.) Here again, Lanzmann is at his best. Using total self-control, he never reacts emotionally, loses his temper, or confronts. Clearly he knows that to gather the information before it is lost for all time is the primary goal and that to question his subjects about moral responsibility is to court disaster, and will only result in his subject's retreat. Yet every once in a while some sarcasm comes through as he repeats word for word what a Nazi has told him.

Throughout the film, Lanzmann keeps a low profile. But one can sense the warmth and regard that he possesses for the last set of subjects—the victims. Like the Nazis, he spent years finding these men (and they are all male). For these are not ordinary survivors; these are survivors of the last stages of the death process. These men worked in the gas chambers, cutting women's hair or disposing of the final remains. No one survived the gassing process, so only these witnesses can tell us what happened.

Like the Nazis, these men are reluctant to speak, although for very different reasons. Over and over again, Lanzmann makes us aware of the contradiction between the victim's need to forget and civilization's need to remember. Lanzmann is a good oral historian. Again the seemingly trivial questions. What time of day was it? What was the weather like? But these questions prompt memory, help set the stage, bring back smells and images. The subjects begin. Some, like Filip Muller, the survivor of five liquidations of the Auschwitz "special detail," are articulate and born story-tellers. Others, like Abraham Bomba, a barber in Treblinka, are more reluctant. Lanzmann is gentle, but firm. "We must go on." He apologizes.

Muller describes the cement-like bodies which tumbled from the over-crowded gas chambers when they were opened, and guesses at the death struggles which must have taken place from the evidence of bloodied bodies, crushed skulls, the strong on top of the weak. For the first time, we can imagine what it would have been like to have been *inside.*

Again, Lanzmann holds his camera on the speakers for long, uninterrupted takes. He allows the camera to continue running when they avoid the questions, when they refuse to speak, and when they break down in tears. But Lanzmann never exploits his subjects. We have seen them over a period of time; we know their strengths. When they break it is only *in extremis* and we can put this in its proper perspective. Lanzmann has objected to the use of clips on television which go for the jugular and which lift scenes of crying men out of context in order to achieve instant sympathy.

In many ways *Shoah* is an obsessional film. It is not about survival, but about death. It is about the procedures that the Nazis used and the extermination camps where the end product was the production of death. It is about the Final Solution—about imagining the unimaginable.

In the end what makes *Shoah* so extraordinary is its refusal to become a work of art despite its artistry. Always it remains on the level of document. For unlike *Night and Fog,* it never allows you to pull away and to relate to it as an art object. Here there is no haunting music, no special effects, no poetic narrator. Here there are only facts and victims. For all its greatness, *Night and Fog* lacks specificity. The victims are never identified. The word "Jew" is never uttered on the screen.

Towards the end of *Shoah,* Lanzmann once again shows the fields of Treblinka. It is winter. The surviving gas chamber looks like a primitive monument with its giant stones—like Stonehenge or Easter Island. The smaller stone markers placed there by Jewish survivors look like a Greek chorus or mourners. It is awesome. All is silent; all is dead.

The fragmented pieces of *Shoah* come together. All told, they relate a bigger story; the whole is truly larger than the sum of the individual parts. And oddly it is as if we are hearing it all for the first time. Like all great documentaries, *Shoah* raises questions, creates contradictions, lives on after the last frame. It is not an exaggeration to say that the experience becomes hypnotic, obsessional. Clearly the film's circular structure serves as a metaphor for the closed world of the Jewish victims which always led to the same fate. After nine and a half hours, fascination replaces fatigue. The more you know, the more you want to know. The circle is closed.

—PATRICIA ERENS

The Annual FQ Book Roundup

Our attempt to present comprehensive coverage of the English-language film books published in the past year has again overrun this issue's available space; the remaining categories will be surveyed in the Fall issue. (A few volumes, including several of importance, are still out for review.) As before, we have grouped titles in two alphabetical-by-author series within each category: the series for longer reviews, and that for briefer listings. Annotations signed "E.C." are by Ernest Callenbach, "J.F." by John Fell.

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THE LEGEND OF MAYA DEREN

A Documentary Biography and Collected Works, Vol. I, Part I (1917-1942)

Edited by Vévé A. Clark, Millicent Hodson and Catrina Neiman. New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1985. $40.00 cloth, $22.50 paper.

In life, Deren was the first important talent of the American avant-garde film. Her films remain compelling today, and her enthusiastic proselytizing for the possibilities of film as an independent art form was crucial to the evolution of what has sometimes been called the "underground" film. Deren herself would hardly have liked this term. She would not have minded at all, however, the transmogrification into legend that is underway with this ambitious series of books—of which this is the first of four.

I saw Maya Deren only once, when she came to lecture at the University of Chicago, around 1949. She was a slight but dynamic figure, with a flaring reddish Afro and pale skin, and moved like a dancer when she spoke. She played the role of invited artist-goddess to the hilt, giving off the kind of electric energy that emanates from "stars," and we undergraduates in the Documentary Film Group who had invited her were duly knocked over. We had also, of course, been struck by *Meshes of the Afternoon* and her other films, and by her writings, which set standards of originality, alert creative intelligence and artistic self-consciousness which commercial film-makers of the time concealed, if they were lucky enough to possess them. Deren created herself, or perhaps the myth of herself, with an energy that impressed her contemporaries, many of whom are interviewed in this volume, and still impresses the editors of this volume, who appear never to have met her in person. Indeed they have felt it unnecessary to present a case for the importance of Deren's work—perhaps this will be attended to in the next volume, which is to be on her development as a film-maker.

The present volume, of more than 500 pages, contains a brief introductory essay setting the terms of its subject's self-transformation from the yearning adolescent Eleanora to the Maya she later became, followed by chapters on the stages of this evolution. Since Deren was an artist of emotionally evocative images, the editors lay great psychological emphasis on the famous "Botticelli" shot of her (taken by her then husband and collaborator, the film-maker Alexander Hammid), though they note that in time she came to prefer Erzulie, the Haitian goddess, to Venus. (Much of Deren's work in later years revolved around dance, and she spent a good deal of time in Haiti.)

The editors have been incredibly industrious in unearthing information about their heroine. This devotion goes a little far; they talk about "Eleanora discovering her selves and the miracle of the synthesis in Maya." But even if you don't rank Deren as a towering figure in film history, the documentary materials assembled here have a fascination as cultural history: interviews with people who knew her in her youthful socialist-organizer period and at other points in her life (one lover, a Bohemian part-time artist, found her a little silly and pretentious, and not very relaxed sexually); rich materials on her intense family life; documents bearing on her interest in Haitian dance and *voudoun* trance states; extensive selections from unpublished writings—including quite a lot of poetry, a "synopsis of science-fiction pulp novelette," letters to her "alter ego," and so on. The work of the editors in ferreting out all these things is described in some detail, which gives an ongoing shape to the volume. All in all, if the project is ever completed—and since Jonas Mekas wants it to be, it probably will—it will be one of the more extraordinary portraits of an artist ever assembled.

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Henderson, Kathy. *First Stage: Profiles of the New American Actors*. New York: Morrow, 1985. $12.95. Picture book with 20 brief, gushy career summaries. —E.C.

Allan Hunter. *James Stewart*. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1985. $8.95. Booklet summarizing the actor's career.

Hyman, B.D. *My Mother's Keeper*. New York: Morrow, 1985. $17.95. Portrait of Bette Davis by her daughter.

Jewell, Derek. *Frank Sinatra: A Celebration*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1986. $19.95. Most of this book concerns Sinatra's life rather than work, touching gingerly on his activities in politics and the various business enterprises that earned him $10-20 million a year. —E.C.

Johnstone, Iain. *Dustin Hoffman*. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1985. $6.95. A booklet-sized survey of the actor's life and work.

Judge, Philip. *Michael Caine*. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1985. $8.95. Booklet summarizing the actor's career.

McIntosh, William and William Weaver. *The Private Cary Grant*. Salem, NH: Merrimack, 1985. $14.95. A British perspective on Grant's private life. —E.C.

McKay, Keith. *Robert De Niro: The Hero Behind the Masks*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986. $14.95. The biographical material in this volume is sparse—De Niro not being exactly forthcoming with spicy information on his private life—but McKay compensates with sensible remarks on the films. —E.C.

Malcolm, Derek. *Robert Mitchum*. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1985. $6.95. Booklet on the actor's career.

Marx. Arthur. *The Nine Lives of Mickey Rooney*. New York: Stein and Day, 1986. $17.95. One disastrous show-biz life wasn't enough for Rooney, always an over-achiever: obsessive womanizing, eight marriages, alcohol, gambling. —E.C.

Morella, Joe and Edward Z. Epstein. *Jane Wyman: A Biography*. New York: Delacorte, 1985. $15.95. Includes a lengthy but utterly unsensational account of her marriage to Ronald Reagan. —E.C.

Mosley, Leonard. *Disney's World*. Briarcliff Manor, NY: Stein & Day, 1985. $18.95. Mosley often works from tape-recorded interviews, and sometimes minor howlers result, like restorationist Kemp Niver coming out as "Captain Iver" who worked on "paper negatives." But Mosley's very readable account of Disney's life and business career (not much about actual film-making) is detailed, circumstantial, and judicious, not skimping his anti-black, anti-Semitic, and generally right-wing attitudes and his many failings as brother, manager, and husband. The over-all story is especially intriguing because the Disney operation bridged over from the madcap baronial style of the great early years into the contemporary world of grey bureaucratic finance capital and merchandising—a wrenching personal and emotional shift for many of the people involved. Oddly enough, the pseudo-"community" of EPCOT is a ghastly memorial to the immensely creative if tyrannical, exploitative, and often cruel man who did indeed establish a real community of a sort in the Burbank studios in the old days.
—E.C.

_____. *Zanuck: The Rise and Fall of Hollywood's Last Tycoon*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1985. $19.95. Did Darryl F. Zanuck have a Small Man Complex? Was he afflicted by satyriasis all his life? And just how did he make it to the top in the cutthroat Dream Factory? Inquiring minds want to know. After reading *Zanuck,* I *still* want to know. The book is a shotgun wedding of Joan Collins's *Past Imperfect* to Walter Scott's "Personality Parade." It tells all: his disastrous family life, his mammary obsession, his callous disregard for his friends, directors, actors. Every twenty pages it reveals a glimpse of the man's creative process. For example, we learn that while he dared produce *The Grapes of Wrath,* he nevertheless altered Steinbeck's radical ending to preserve the "human side." The book fails to show us the dynamics of his decline or the cultural context behind his decisions. Skimping on social history, Mosley's book frolics through titillation and scandal. Like Zanuck's last three films the result is pap, fit only for long airline rides.
—PETER BATES

Nathan, David. *Glenda Jackson*. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1985. $6.95. Mostly conversations with or about Jackson and her work in theater and film. —E.C.

Nathan, John. *Mishima: A Biography*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1985. $8.95 paper. Another perspective on the writer who lived like a banker but kept his craziness inside.

Oumano, Ellen. *Sam Shepard: The Life and Work of an American Dreamer*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 1986. $12.95. A highly original playwriting talent, Shepard has now become "the Gary

Cooper of the eighties." Oumano portrays him through page after page of interview material—keeping herself journalistically in the background, so it's hard to tell what she makes of it all, except that Shepard must be interesting because he's so famous. —E.C.

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Ragan, David. *Mel Gibson: An Intimate Biography.* New York: Dell, 1985. $3.95. Fan fodder. —E.C.

Ralston, Esther. *Some Day We'll Laugh: An Autobiography.* Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1985. $16.00. The "American Venus" gives innocent glimpses, always tantalizingly brief, of Arzner, Rathbone, LaCava, Cooper, and many others. —E.C.

Roberts, Glenys. *Bardot.* New York, NY: St. Martins Press, 1985. $14.95. Overwrought biography, curiously French in tone (the author is British). —E.C.

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Criticism

GEORGE CUKOR
A Critical Study and Filmography

By James Bernardoni. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1985.

This study's strength rests on thoughtful insights grown out of intensive viewings, film by film, and from a coherent critical perspective. Author evokes auteur by citing Bazin, empha-

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sizing *mise-en-scène,* and locating consistencies in a thematic, Cukorian preoccupation: a family or couple alternately isolated, threatened, or paired off against the outside world. Bernardoni's book consists of eight essays detailing intentional designs in *David Copperfield, Zaza, The Philadelphia Story, Adam's Rib, A Star is Born, Let's Make Love, Heller in Pink Tights,* and *Rich and Famous.* He eschews biographical details and production information. Cukor's prior theatrical history working with figures like Laurette Taylor, Ethel Barrymore and Jeanne Eagels, his film apprenticeships with such directors as Milestone and Lubitsch, and other Cukor pictures like *Camille* and *The Women* all fall through the cracks.

In acknowledgment and by example, the author is indebted to an earlier Robin Wood, the one of *Hitchcock's Films* vintage. Bernardoni looks to stagings and blocking, often theatrical, to point up his thesis: pairings and triplings of emotionally tied characters set against some disruption. A well-chosen, well-described example is the interconnection among David Copperfield, his mother and Peggoty, and the ominous, visually juxtaposed Mr. Murdstone. *Zaza,* which Bernardoni judges the weakest of his subjects, balances Zaza and her music hall family against her lover Dufresne.

So reified a critical strategy may disenfranchise whatever eludes the author's depth of field. Thus an early sequence in *Zaza,* one that introduces Dufresne to the singer, "might have initiated a central theme of the film if Cukor had held it long enough to give it importance . . ." At the far end of the scale, Judy Holliday's famous monologue in *Adam's Rib* runs too long, not because it's uncut but because the characters "can't bear the significance that the sequence as shot gives her." She's neither a family member nor a threat.

Adam's Rib makes an interesting focus of cricital visions. For Molly Haskell in *From Reverence to Rape,* the Holliday speech is "a long, lovely single-take (*sic*) scene" and the actress-character is complimented. In Haskell's feminist reading, the film's "slightly coy, happy ending" underlines serious issues: sexual roles disguised beneath a comic surface. In *Pursuits of Happiness,* Stanley Cavell hears Spencer Tracy's closing line ("Vive la différence") as "Hooray for that little difference," a celebration of healthy marital dispute. Bernardoni believes the ending inadequate; the story just stops. Bernardoni finds the home-movie sequence in *Adam's Rib* one of the film's weakest. Haskell ignores it. Cavell rhapsodizes for nine-and-a-half pages, winding up with parallels to Dziga Vertov's *Man With a Movie Camera.* For Cavell, the David Wayne character in Cukor's film is a show-biz homosexual, clearly unimportant to the Tracy-Hepburn relationship. For Bernardoni, the idea of Wayne upsetting Tracy is a lamentable miscalculation on Cukor's part.

Bernardoni is so careful an analyst his shot-to-shot descriptions read at times like notes. "There's a cut to Amanda entering the bedroom at the right and immediately leaving it at the left. Adam walks in, stops at the center of the shot, and begins to unwrap a hat box. There's a cut to a detail shot of a hat, and then the camera tilts up from the hat to a medium shot of Adam examining it. He replaces the hat in the box and puts the box on a chair in the middle of the room." Such close study begs for frame enlargements. At best, Bernardoni argues his cases well, and his positions are graced by an awareness of Cukor's stylizations as they sometimes border expressionism. We may not agree that *A Star is Born* "stands apart as a towering achievement of cinematic art," but enthusiasm in a good cause is hardly shameful, and George Cukor is surely a good cause.

—JOHN FELL

DOUBLE EXPOSURE: FICTION INTO FILM

By Joy Gould Boyum. New York: Universe Books, 1985. $19.95.

With the growing popularity of home VCRs, and cassettes even in many book stores, we can curl up with a movie the way we used to with a good book. This book is timely, to say the least, if we accept Boyum's premise that seeing a movie equals the experience of reading a novel. It is also interesting to note that for the week of January 24, 1986, *The Color Purple* was #2 on *Publishers Weekly's* mass market paperback bestsellers list, and *Out of Africa* was #1 on the trade paperback bestsellers list. Neither book was new on the market, but the two movies were getting a lot of

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Boyum, however, assumes the novel to have been read *first,* and fails to give credence to other possibilities. "In other words, each of us who has read the novel will in some way already have made the movie—our own movie—to which we're likely to have considerable commitment. This is one of the reasons that we so often tend to be so disappointed by the movie up there on the screen, and to express what we believe is a preference for the book itself over its adaptation. But what we are actually doing is announcing an allegiance to our own imaginative re-creation."

Such a "reader-response" theory, though valid on one level, also prevents seeing the films on their own terms. Boyum can be brilliant—as with Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange,* for example—in discussing the way a film has used the symbolism in the book in new ways to create its own symbolism. Where the film radically leaves the book behind—as in *Apocalypse Now* or *Lord of the Flies*—she fails to observe the risks such a film takes. What she overlooks, perhaps, is that in such films the viewer who has not read the book is actually better off, since he or she comes to the film with no preconceptions. Throughout, she seems to have a poor concept of a film's risks unless they are overstated, and displays an annoying tendency to miss the subtleties.

In her first chapter, a historical overview of films based on literature, Boyum discusses very early films, such as a one-reel *Ben Hur,* being praised for their "educational potential" and points out that "such films were aimed primarily at the lower classes and so were perceived as a promising means of providing these viewers with a share in 'the great tradition'." Unfortunately, such prejudices have stayed with many of the higher, educated classes. And Boyum, herself a teacher of English literature, admits she at one point shared many of these prejudices.

Boyum continues her argument that "The literary establishment seems not to have noticed, however, given that so many of the arguments it puts forth against adaptation (and against movies themselves) are really arguments about film-as-it-was, rather than about film-as-it-is . . . Made today, *The Grapes of Wrath* could have retained the novel's devastating ending . . . A film of *Farewell to Arms* in the 1980s wouldn't have to marry off Catherine and Frederick . . ." She fails to substantiate her points, however, and such a general statement does not take into account her preference for the 1948 version of *The Great Gatsby.*

Another important part of her thesis, that our view of the relation of film to literature needs updating since George Bluestone's 1957 *Novels into Film* is weakened by her concluding chapter—on Orson Welles's *The Magnificent Ambersons.* This, and her discussion of Harold Pinter's *The Proust Screenplay,* which will possibly never be realized on film, are the book's least timely sections. All in all, she covers eighteen English or American films, including such naturals as *Sophie's Choice, Daisy Miller, Women in Love,* and *Tess.* A few other inclusions are more surprising: *The Innocents, Wise Blood,* or *The French Lieutenant's Woman.* She further divides the films into categories, according to what she perceives as their strongest elements: "Point of View," "Style and Tone," "Metaphor, Symbol, Allegory," and "Interiors: Thought, Dream, Inner Action." Unfortunately, this division works only for a few of the films she discusses; the others either do not fit, or she does not present a convincing enough argument in their regard.

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Chanan's book is a proudly partisan history of a small but disproportionally significant national film tradition and of the social, cul-

tural, political, and economic context which reciprocally shaped it. Erudite without ponderousness or pretension, Chanan's history cuts a broad swath in chronological, geographic and thematic terms. Its author demonstrates an impressive command of both European and Latin American intellectual and social history. (See, for example, his discussion of the anthropologically derived Latin American concept of syncretism in contrast to the more psychologically based European notion [pp. 267-268].) *The Cuban Image* offers rich mini-essays on a wide range of cultural, political, historical and philosophical topics—Afrocubanism, the "dual nature" of film, the image of Fidel Castro. Chanan is a gifted conceptual exegete; his paraphrases of essays by Latin American writers and filmmakers enrich the originals while making them accessible to a wider audience. (His summary of Daniel Diaz Torres and Enrique Colina's essay on the ideology of melodrama in traditional Latin American cinema is a particularly fine example.) This is an absorbing history because its author displays a philosopher's penchant for examining all facets of a concept under the clear light of reason intensified by wit and passion.

Chanan has a knack for framing the known in new and revealing ways and a related gift for telling capsule formulations: Cuba as an "offshore testing laboratory for US media technologies," the local newsreels as an "ideological protection racket." He skillfully anticipates his readers' questions and objections, providing qualifications and digressions as needed. The rhythm of these interjections contributes to the book's intensely personal, almost conversational style. (For some readers, phrases like "the shit of individualism," and "the more tightarsed critics" may be a bit *too* colloquial; others will find this often polemical lack of decorum refreshing.)

Chanan's accounts of political debates and conflicts in the cultural arena are enriched by probing discussions with major and minor participants which took place over seven years and a dozen visits to the island. Throughout this period, he was accorded generous access to the Film Institute's print and film archives. His library research has uncovered fascinating factual nuggets—Cuba as the "birthplace" of ITT, for example. Descriptions of a substantial number of films which are unknown outside of Cuba and underrecognized within the country are the payoff of countless hours in the screening rooms. (Foremost among these, by Chanan's own account, are a group of documentaries by Sara Gómez (1943-1974), whose only feature, *One Way or Another,* has generated considerable interest among Anglo-American critics.) Because of the scope and seriousness of its scholarship, and because of the Cubans' commitment to the book and its author, this will remain the authoritative account of the development of film in Cuba for many years to come.

Despite its many virtues, *The Cuban Image* has some serious limitations. Chanan's tendency toward sustained discourse on any number of secondary topics occasionally upsets the balance of what is, overall, a graceful and functional organizational scheme. The decision to offer separate pairs of chapters on documentary and fictional film, though arguably the most convenient approach, fails to highlight the way Cuban film-makers have in theory as well as practice exposed the essential arbitrariness of this dichotomy. Chanan frequently assumes a polemical tone, railing against "unsympathetic commentators," "the faint-hearted," "critics who pretend to omniscience," etc. An explicit examination of the ideological differences which shape critical response would have been more illuminating and more effective.

Though his readers have the occasional privilege of savoring brilliant film descriptions (e.g., *Death of a Bureaucrat* [1966], or the account of *For the First Time* [1967] which serves as point of entry into the book), Chanan too seldom elaborates his own critical assessment of the films he singles out for sustained discussion. Instead, he constructs his accounts out of quotes from other critics, the initial majority of them Latin Americans writing in Latin American publications. This emphasis on indigenous voices is consistent with Chanan's commendable effort to depict Latin American culture on its own terms, from within. In many cases, Chanan strives to recapitulate responses to the film at or near the time of its release, thus retaining the historical context of reception rather than testing the films as timeless, contextless commodities—an equally commendable effort. Yet this *bric-*

olage strategy deflects direct critical engagement, excusing Chanan from formulating his own criticism(s) in his own voice. With films of exceptional importance, Chanan either assembles a collage of quotations (as in his treatment of *Lucía* [1969]) or attempts laborious scene-by-scene reconstructions (his account of *Memories of Underdevelopment* [1968]). Particularly when there are negative comments to be made about a film, Chanan seems to be hiding behind the words of other writers. Among the rare instances of "direct intervention" is his denunciation of "the traditional imagery of machismo" and "the crudest of misogynist stereotypes" in *The Literacy Teacher* (1977).

Most problematic is the imbalance in the book's coverage. Chanan expends some 250 pages recounting the prehistory and first decade of postrevolutionary Cuban cinema, collapsing the seventies into a mere 50 pages. The decision to deal only selectively with the seventies (Pastor Vega's remarkably controversial *Portrait of Teresa* [1979] and a number of other important films are judged "too recent for retrospective historical study") and to omit the eighties altogether enables Chanan to concentrate on ICAIC's "heroic" period (roughly 1965–1975) without having to acknowledge current difficulties or address their possible causes. To conclude with a chapter on Sara Gómez's *One Way or Another* seems a puzzlingly sentimental gesture in light of the contrary direction most Cuban film-making has taken in the decade since her death. This unwillingness to engage the larger problematics confronting Cuban film culture over the last half dozen years—manifest most notably in the marked decline in the artistic quality and ideological intricacy of Cuban feature films—leaves the reader somewhat adrift at the book's conclusion. This lack of closure also conveys an unspoken hope that film in Cuba will recapture its cultural and political centrality.

In *The Cuban Image,* Michael Chanan weaves a rich tapestry of images, ideas, information. Within the Latin American sphere, no other history of a national film tradition has defined the scope of its inquiry so broadly or traced the intersecting threads of social, political and cultural life so deftly. The book's shortcomings pale in comparison to its achievements; it deserves a wide readership.

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ANTONIONI
or, The Surface of the World

By Seymour Chatman. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985. $35.00 cloth, $12.95 paper.

In a free-ranging analysis of the evolution of Antonioni's style, quoting liberally from Antonioni's own highly articulate writing and interviews, Chatman shows how difficult it was for him to escape conventional means of rendering narrative, especially in respect to dialogue, conventional sound effects, and commentative music. This study covers all of Antonioni's work, including the films not dealt with in any other book on the great director.

FILM: THE FRONT LINE 1984

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One of the most ludicrous and persistent myths to circulate in the independent film world is that the American avant-garde or "personal" film movement is in a state of creative crisis—that little work of real value has been produced in recent years. Virtually every key writer on the subject (Sitney, Hoberman, Camper, Cornwell, et al.) has said something to this effect, and this attitude now appears to be accepted without question by artists and critics of other disciplines as well. It is becoming increasingly clear, however, that the real crisis exists within the much vaunted (and frequently vilified) avant-garde "establishment" itself. Few showcases survive which choose to show new and difficult work (i.e., work with little potential for popular appeal), film schools are cautious and conservative in what they will endorse for study purposes, and there is little supportive or meaningful critical feedback in either the popular or esoteric press. It is a fact that there has been some drop-off in productivity due to rising costs and a general cultural depression (evidenced as well in the theater, music, dance, and performance arts), but it is also a fact that substantial numbers of important and neglected

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films have been made over the past decade—many by now mature artists well into their thirties and forties.

Film: The Front Line is Arden Press's annual attempt to provide fresh perspectives on what is new and overlooked in personal and experimental film-making. Each year a different critic defines film's "cutting edge" (the series' symbol for which is a razor blade), and annotates the work of at least twenty previously undiscussed film-makers. David Ehrenstein's 1984 entry (following on the heels of Jonathan Rosenbaum's 1983 inaugural volume), makes certain developing tendencies within the series clear. This forum is decidedly unacademic; it is timely (Ehrenstein often refers to events which occurred only months before the book went to press); it is chatty and stylistically diverse (including sketch-descriptions, detailed analyses, and interviews); sometimes sloppy in detail (Jack Smith never appeared in San Francisco in 1981, as Ehrenstein maintains), and favoring provocative generalizations. While each of the two volumes has taken a significant step toward opening a new dialogue with an impassioned and somewhat distinctive orientation, they fall short of addressing the problem at its most critical level.

Ehrenstein states his belief at the outset that the avant-garde is a machine—an establishment which controls the nature of what is produced, and the manner in which it is both shown and perceived. The film-makers who are significant in Ehrenstein's argument have actively defied or eluded the system, resulting in their dismissal from it: according to Ehrenstein, it is necessary to "put everything to the test," and re-examine all our cherished assumptions, from the value of sacred historical figures to the segregated manner in which experimental films are distributed and exhibited. For Ehrenstein, the most vital films are those which go into the world not knowing who their audiences will be, products which often seem half-finished or on the verge of self-destruction.

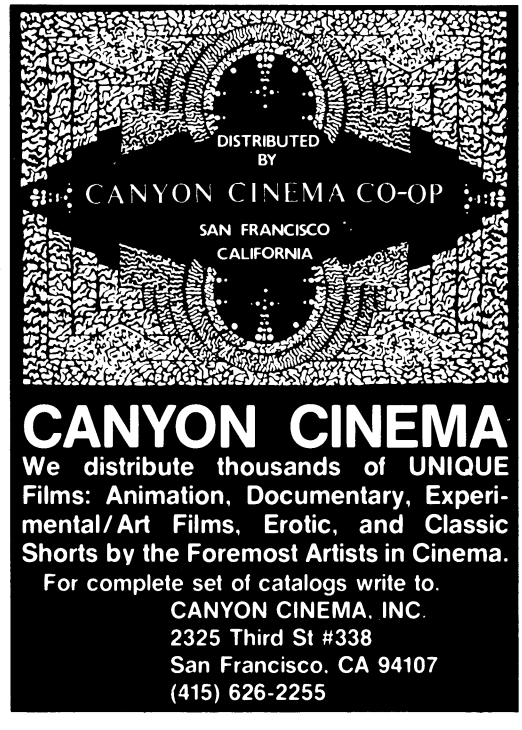
The legendary Jack Smith becomes the pivotal figure around whom Ehrenstein builds his argument. Smith is known chiefly for one misunderstood and now rarely seen masterpiece, *Flaming Creatures,* while his more ephemeral and difficult works remain largely ignored. In one of the most lucid accounts of Smith's aesthetics that I've read, Ehrenstein describes a Smith performance: "In his hands discarded film stock turns to a mine of visual riches, amateur players disclose depths no 'professional' could hope to reveal, decor culled from pieces of (literal) garbage vibrate with scenic loveliness, and executional errors, rather than distract, reveal themselves as the essence of affectivity." Ehrenstein has chosen Smith wisely, since along with his early collaborator Ken Jacobs (who is given a sensitive and perceptive treatment in a subsequent chapter), he has received only token appreciation for work that is among the most challenging and original contributions to the American avant-garde. Smith's art remains unpredictable and embarrassing to audiences easily confused or naively turned-off.

Two more figures of firmly established historical value are surprisingly included next in Ehrenstein's argument: Owen Land (George Landow) and Bruce Conner. Land is seen as a film-maker whose work is often analyzed but rarely understood, primarily because his aesthetic continually places the viewer in an ambiguous position. Conner, a permanent *enfant terrible* of the avant-garde, is included because his latest project—a documentary on the black gospel group, The Soul Stirrers—runs so completely counter to the "avant-establishment" machine. It is this work, Ehrenstein predicts, that will finally make Connor truly controversial. "He is leaving the cocoon of the avant-garde for the less certain confines of the commercial market-place." Ehrenstein is apparently ignorant of the storms of protest which greeted *Marilyn x 5, Cosmic Ray, Crossroads,* as well as *Report,* the only film by Conner he cites in this regard. The arguments for the inclusion of these two artists are less than convincing in light of the terms Ehrenstein has constructed for himself, and the analyses of the films are similarly less vivid. Both film-makers have sizable followings and have been written about extensively.

The "avant-establishment" is repeatedly and cuttingly set up as the foil against which vital film-makers must persevere. This "artery-hardened" machine is criticized at every turn; as audience ("the academic bourgeoisie—with which the co-op avant-garde is presently allied"), as product ("anal retentive grad school pretentiousness") and especially as the "pimps

of the academy" for which Ehrenstein has no use at all, "the academic and institutional mills that have come to be considered the proper province of all that is best in avant-garde and independent work today." Ehrenstein reveals his own myopic vision in demeaning both the creative process by viewing it primarily in social terms, and the process of critical, historical reevaluation. He debunks the recent rediscovery of the experimental work of Belgian film-maker Charles Dekeukelière (work made in the late twenties), claiming that Dekeukelière made his films to order for a hot-house "art" audience (yet who else made films like his, and who, after all, was watching them?). His accusation of critics Kristin Thompson and J. Hoberman as clothing Dekeukelière in new "structural" terms is a misunderstanding of the nature of art history. Dekeukelière was himself engaged in the "creative process," unaware, while thus engaged, of how the substance of his vision would be ultimately realized, hence "experimental." We are now simply in a better position to appreciate the significance of what he was doing 50 years ago. Did Charles Ives "anticipate" all the twentieth-century trends implicit in his work?

The remaining film-makers whom Ehrenstein discusses in depth share at least one thing, in his argument: they have either succeeded or shown serious interest in "escaping" from the "unquestioned institutional ghetto," the "cocoon" of the American avant-garde. That he can view such a ghetto as a desired place to be for any segment of its imagined population reveals an ignorance grounded in presumptions regarding the make-up of the "avant-establishment." No artist *chooses* to be in such a ghetto. This invented "ghetto" is in reality a diverse and widespread community of film-makers whose work has little chance for popular acceptance because the films are not trendy or obvious—work which makes more demands than a tired film culture is capable of responding to. There is no "current structural preoccupation" within the "co-op movement" (another of his favored targets), no party lines, no comfortable sense of family or community. Film-makers are constantly having to scrape money together just to continue making their films, yet the commitment to this psychically exhausting process is still very evident throughout the country. It is truly a miracle that so many small films are still being made each year, since invariably this work is rebuffed with indifference or derision. Is Ehrenstein aware of the degree of commitment in resources and energy that is required to produce even a modest film work? Can there be an "establishment" machine if even in San Francisco, long considered one of the bastions of the "co-op movement," nearly five years elapsed (between 1980 and 1984) during which time no Frampton was publicly shown, and Stan Brakhage, despite the *Artforum* issue devoted to his work in 1973, continues to make films in obscurity (a major work, *Unconscious London Strata,* has only been shown publicly a few times since its completion in 1981)? For Ehrenstein, the fact that such film-makers as Bette Gordon or Amos Poe used the independent cinema as a "steppingstone" to the "semi-commercial big-time" is "indicative of the fact that today the number of choices before American film-makers [for exhibition] has been sharply reduced." The fallacy in this association is blatant. The fact that two film-makers are no longer willing to live with obscurity, and decide to migrate to the spotlight of mainstream cinema, should be seen simply as a career move and hardly a result of the



depletion of available screening situations. Poe and Gordon are reflective of a widespread shift in cultural values.

All of the film-makers discussed by Ehrenstein are in some way involved with issues of narrative, an obviously biased and senseless criterion for determining that they belong on "the cutting edge" of film. The list includes several Europeans: Werner Schroeter, Philippe Garrel, Luc Moullet, Sally Potter, and Raul Ruiz, who have already gained international notoriety, though their films remain obscure relative to successful commercial film-makers. He also includes documentarians Joel DeMott, Jeff Kreines, and Laurence Jarvil, whose films maintain the conventions of their genres, but who are cited for their willingness to alienate their presumed public and American independent film-makers Warren Sonbert, Lizzie Borden, and Curt McDowell, whose works have received a large amount of critical attention or popular support. The criteria used for selecting this group are clearly arbitrary and organized around social legitimacy rather than aesthetic considerations. Further, these choices are not as risky as Ehrenstein may feel. Sonbert has already been the subject of a major Whitney retrospective ("cutting edge"?), and his latest film, *A Woman's Touch,* was a logical and somewhat predictable extension of his last 15 years' work. Ernie Gehr could have been more convincingly included in that slot, since his recent *Untitled '81* stymied most of his audience in its strategy of filming *people* in a jarring manner during the course of their daily activities.

The knee-jerk denigration of the "co-op movement," that is, the large majority of American film-makers who can seriously be considered on "the cutting edge," reflects the general disdain with which they are presently regarded. Abigail Child, Saul Levine, Daniel Barnett, Bill Brand, Vincent Grenier, Gunvor Nelson, Rob Danielson, and Nathaniel Dorsky have all been making films for nearly twenty years, and have produced substantial bodies of work which would render them deserving of serious critical thought. There are dozens more who have produced several films of unquestionable power and beauty. A partial list includes Janis Crystal Lipzin, Caroline Avery, Gail Camhi, Ellen Gaine, Daniel Eisenberg, Willie Varela, Richard Levine, Gary Adkins, David Gerstein, Charles Wright, Sharon Couzin, Betzy Bromberg, Gail Currey, Tom Brener, Phillip Weisman, and Melanie Berry. It is ironic that the most unlikely entry into the body of Ehrenstein's book is the long-deceased David Brooks, whose idiosyncratic and perplexing diaristic narratives are just now beginning to be widely appreciated. One wonders whether his inclusion would be probable, were he getting started today. More likely Brooks would be yet another unknown. The small section at the book's end, "Other Cinemas," does indicate that Ehrenstein is somewhat aware of, and potentially sensitive to, such film-makers as listed above, but that he isn't comfortable in taking them seriously yet.

My criticisms of Ehrenstein stem generally from his unflinching willingness to accept so many fashionable prejudices without penetrating beyond them to examine what he is unwittingly excluding that is valuable. His ability to grasp disturbing and iconoclastic forms is impressive, as in his description of Jacobs's *Star Spangled to Death,* "an infernal machine of production, destruction, and regeneration." Discussions of European film-makers Ruiz, Schroeter and Garrel are lively and stimulate a desire to see more of their films, and his treatment of familiar figures such as Smith, Jacobs, and Landow is refreshing. However, in order to re-establish the "mystery" supposedly now lacking in the avant-garde (as Rosenbaum maintains in the first volume), Ehrenstein and his colleagues will need to be willing to reconsider some of their own tired assumptions.

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JOHN HUSTON

By Scott Hammen. Boston: Twayne, 1985.

John Huston has always squirmed at being measured for auteurism. By early Truffaut notions, Huston is consistently beholden to the printed page, even if he escaped studio confines after World War II. When auteurism zeroed in on Hollywood contract directors, Huston's integrity toward his literary sources seemed to disdain any celebrations of tension between film-maker and subject matter, frictions that were supposed to ignite personal style. Well and broadly read, he scurried,

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chameleon-like, among writers as various as Ellen Glasgow, W. R. Burnett, C. S. Forester and Flannery O'Conner. His *Key Largo* turned out quite different from Maxwell Anderson's play, but then it wasn't very good either.

Faced with his subject, Scott Hammen makes one valiant effort to foreground a coherent pattern. "To the degree that a consistent thematic element can be traced through his work (and that degree has often been exaggerated), it concerns the involvement of a band of ill-matched eccentrics in an adventurous quest for something that proves, if not unattainable, certainly not worth the effort necessary to attain it." This works for *The Maltese Falcon, The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* and *The Asphalt Jungle.* To apply it to *The Battle of San Pietro* seems inappropriate, to *Moulin Rouge* inexact, to *Moby Dick* insufficient, to *Fat City* insignificant.

For the most part, Hammen wisely confines his study to a chronological rundown of Huston's work. The text consists largely of production information, plot summaries, evaluations of performances and overall judgments about each film. A description of the battle sequences in *The Red Badge of Courage* filmed by Robert Rossen is nicely specific, but such visual emphases are untypical. Understandably, interesting films get more space, although it's unfortunate that *The Life of Judge Roy Bean* merits nothing at all. The filmography extends through *Phobia* (1980), *Victory* (1981), *Annie* (1982) and *Under the Volcano* (1984), but these projects earn little more than cursory paragraphs.

Previous books about Huston tend toward anecdotes about a colorful life, and Hammen's selected bibliography goes little beyond these titles and a Peter Viertel novel that turned Huston into a kind of goofy Hemingway groupie making *The African Queen.* It's too bad that other pieces of research aren't used. In "A Talk with John Huston" by Dan Ford (*Action,* September–October 1972), the director betrays a painterly sophistication that's usually camouflaged. Richard Jameson's essay in a 1980 *Film Comment* is extensive. An MA thesis by Douglas Gallez analyzes *San Pietro* in great detail (USC, 1957). *Let There Be Light, The Maltese Falcon, The Asphalt Jungle* and *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* have all been published in script form.

Except for a French monograph by Robert Benayoun, Hammen's study is measurably superior to other Huston books, but it's far from definitive. Someone, for example, ought to counterbalance Dashiell Hammett's novel, Huston's first film, and *Dangerous Female,* the 1931 version directed by Roy del Ruth. Both films are very similarly sequenced and scripted and draw on identical Hammett dialogue. Both also omit most of the same material: the Flintcraft story, Gutman's daughter Rhea, Effie checking the medieval falcon history, Hammett's ending. Both also have very similar camera setups, except that left to right for del Ruth is right to left for Huston, high angles in 1931 are low angles in 1941. Maybe Huston did more homework than we've suspected. —JOHN FELL

FRANKLIN J. SCHAFFNER

By Erwin Kim. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1985.

As movie studio B's, short subjects and second units served for training grounds to a previous generation, live black-and-white television prepared Delbert Mann, Martin Ritt, John Frankenheimer, Robert Mulligan, Sidney Lumet, Arthur Penn, George Roy Hill and Franklin Schaffner, also Paddy Chayevsky, Reginald Rose, Horton Foote, Tad Mosel, N. Richard Nash, Robert Alan Arthur, Gore Vidal and Rod Serling. These are figures who pass through Kim's first hundred pages, an engrossing account of the dynamics of TV drama in New York. The so-called Golden Age has been recounted often enough, but a subject like Schaffner provides a kind of unifying perspective on the business of visual entertainment.

Schaffner started in television in 1948. He made *The Stripper* for Fox in 1963. That's fifteen years, the time, say, from John Ford's *The Iron Horse* to *Young Mr. Lincoln.* The last film was Pavarotti's movie debut, *Yes, Giorgio* (1982). That's as if D. W. Griffith continued work from Biograph days up to World War II. This is a long career whose highlights have been *The Best Man, Planet of the Apes, Patton* and an underrated *Islands in the Stream.* The director's reputation seems to be that of a skilled professional who can pull excellent performances from star actors, who stays on top of monumental productions

chameleon-like, among writers as various as Ellen Glasgow, W. R. Burnett, C. S. Forester and Flannery O'Conner. His *Key Largo* turned out quite different from Maxwell Anderson's play, but then it wasn't very good either.

Faced with his subject, Scott Hammen makes one valiant effort to foreground a coherent pattern. "To the degree that a consistent thematic element can be traced through his work (and that degree has often been exaggerated), it concerns the involvement of a band of ill-matched eccentrics in an adventurous quest for something that proves, if not unattainable, certainly not worth the effort necessary to attain it." This works for *The Maltese Falcon, The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* and *The Asphalt Jungle.* To apply it to *The Battle of San Pietro* seems inappropriate, to *Moulin Rouge* inexact, to *Moby Dick* insufficient, to *Fat City* insignificant.

For the most part, Hammen wisely confines his study to a chronological rundown of Huston's work. The text consists largely of production information, plot summaries, evaluations of performances and overall judgments about each film. A description of the battle sequences in *The Red Badge of Courage* filmed by Robert Rossen is nicely specific, but such visual emphases are untypical. Understandably, interesting films get more space, although it's unfortunate that *The Life of Judge Roy Bean* merits nothing at all. The filmography extends through *Phobia* (1980), *Victory* (1981), *Annie* (1982) and *Under the Volcano* (1984), but these projects earn little more than cursory paragraphs.

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Faced with such a subject, Kim has compounded an impressively researched 500-page book. This is less an auteur study than a compendium of production methods and pressures, from *Playhouse 90* to ten million dollar movie logistics. The very qualities that have earned Schaffner's major credits make fascinating reading, recounting skills in practice. If you learned to deal with raging sponsors, drunken actors, impossible production schedules, fickle audiences and awful on-camera fortuities, you were prepared to make deals, placate stars, handpick crews, fine-comb scripts and survive locations, all the time maintaining a gentlemanly demeanor and a sense of humor. Ergo Franklin Schaffner.

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MAKING PICTURES
The Pinter Screenplays

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This volume illustrates what happens when a critic rushes to get a potentially valuable study into print. Klein's analysis of Harold Pinter's screenplays includes some good, solid insights into both the author's themes and the techniques that he uses to express those themes. But, due to the number of people working on studies of Pinter's films, Klein had to get hers published quickly. This meant that much of the flavor of her dissertation ("Pinterviews: Problems of Observation from the Modern Disposition") remains. Moreover, she chose not to go beyond an examination of the adaptations of the novels, thus excluding Pinter's adaptations of his own dramas, *The Caretaker, The Birthday Party, The Homecoming,* and *Betrayal.* This is a serious fault, for if "The need for a closer examination of [his] film scripts has arisen from . . . their utility as illuminations of Pinter's dramaturgical practices" and an "analysis of his screenwriting process will promote generic distinctions among the various media," how can the author's work in one of the media be ignored?

The book includes chapters on eight screenplays dealt with in chronological order (*The Servant, The Pumpkin Eater, The Quiller Memorandum, Accident, The Go-Between, The Proust Screenplay, The Last Tycoon,* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*). There are also a "Chonology of Pinter's Writing for Stage and Screen," a bibliography, and an index. These last items reflect the volume's major problem. The chronology, for example, ignores *Langrishe, Go Down* (which similarly escapes mention in the text) and most of Pinter's television scripts. The bibliography is composed of "Writings by Pinter" (incomplete), "Screenplay Sources," and "Other Works Cited." There are some relevant works that Klein does not include. In fact, she cites little or no criticism published since she prepared her dissertation.

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The format for the script chapters is an opening quote from the novel, a plot summary, an examination of Pinter's script, and a conclusion summarizing how Pinter handled the adaptation. Again, though, what is left out is as important as what is included. Klein calls *The Servant* "Pinter's first screenplay," yet it is not, and this is an important fact to consider in tracing the writer's development, for Pinter had previous filmwriting experience that clearly shaped his approach to films; Klein even quotes from an interview in which Pinter describes this learning experience in connection with filming *The Caretaker.*

A last chapter, "Patterns," is intended to summarize and unify. However, it is not sufficiently expanded and it would have been better to incorporate more of the points contained here in the discussions of the films. Ultimately, Klein's arguments are not convincing. Statements are provided without corroborating evidence (as when she states that Pinter "comes to view the present as vastly static and unyielding," p. 191). Furthermore, Klein misses some obvious thematic connections that are reveal-

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ing in themselves (*The Pumpkin Eater* and *Old Times*). More attention to a detailed analysis of Pinter's techniques and the relationship between those techniques and his themes instead of summaries of the themes might have been useful.

Stylistically the book is wooden and the opening chapter is filled with jargon and dissertationese; a reader who glances only at that might not go on. Happily, the volume improves both stylistically and conceptually, although the tone taken by Klein in her notes is disappointing. Her attitude toward critics is arrogant and condescending and leaves her open to challenges for the same reasons that she disparages others.

Since valuable points are made and since this is the first book on the subject, collections with solid holdings in Pinter criticism will want to acquire it. In spite of Klein's valid insights, though, the most significant thing about *Making Pictures* is that, even though it is too narrow in its scope, its very existence may result in other books on the subject never being published—a book on Pinter's adaptations of his own dramas would be an effective balancer. —STEVEN H. GALE

BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI

By Robert Phillip Kolker. New York: Oxford, 1985. $17.95.

If Bertolucci seems sometimes to be checkerboarded with short lectures on Metz, Lacan, Althusser, Barthes and feminism, this is a small price to pay for Kolker's thoughtful and rewarding efforts to contextualize auteurism within contemporary film study. Further, when a single sequence from a film reappears in subsequent chapters, the perspectives work effectively against reductionist interpretation as they afford alternative readings.

Kolker's design plots Bertolucci alternately corroborating and kicking against some parent movie model or aesthetic. *The Grim Reaper,* the director's first feature, amounts to an affectionate withdrawal from Pasolini's *Accatone;* Bertolucci had started his career as an assistant director on that film, itself Pasolini's first feature and a kind of sad farewell to neorealism. Henceforth, the parent who is rejected and embraced becomes the Godard of the sixties. By Kolker's measure, *Before the Revolution* endorses Godard's love of Rossellini, quotes Godard as Godard quoted others, and shares Godard's guilty pleasures in Hollywood genres. *Partner* then partially succeeds in exorcizing Godard by embracing his style. *The Spider's Strategem* avoids Godard's strategem, the better to accomplish a different form of modernist structure. As Godard was turning from mainstream narrative, *Last Tango in Paris* impatiently returned stylistically to orthodox exposition while subverting bourgeois allegiances to family and to romance.

One pivot of Kolker's argument is the bourgeois film-maker of uneasy conscience, a portrait of Bertolucci that of course applies equally well to other European directors, although guilt and conscience are more ethereal in southern California. Bertolucci's compunctions help to account for constant, shifting explorations, for subversion, didacticism and rebellion. The bourgeois element tempts the director to manipulate his camera and actors with grace and precision, to pile reference on reference in affectionate homage to movie traditions. Kolker is so adept at itemizing these asides (Cocteau, Truffaut, *Niagara,* Nicholas Ray, Welles) that the bourgeois reader eagerly chimes in. What about Resnais in *The Spider's Strategem*? The railroad tracks overgrown with weeds from *Night and Fog.* Anomalies of time past and present in single shots. On another level, uneasy bourgeois become central images starting with the personal agonies of Fabrizio in *Before the Revolution.* Generational conflicts are overlaid by politics (*The Conformist, 1900*) and sex (*La luna, Last Tango*), their resolutions compounded with Marx and Freud.

One sequence in each major film generally receives a close analysis (the pigbarn confrontration in *Tragedy of a Ridiculous Man,* the cave myth in *The Conformist*). A Kolker sensitivity that proves especially rewarding is his familiarity with Verdi, who figures so often in Bertolucci's structures. Thus the relationships among Clelia, Fabrizio and Gina in Parma's Teatro Regio (*Before the Revolution*) are pinpointed, aria by aria; *Macbeth* provides counterpoint, motivational underpinnings and ironic commentary. Similarly, *Rigoletto* underwrites *The Spider's Strategem,* a story of betrayal, murder and mistaken identity, while the emotions of *La traviata* and *Il trovatore* contribute text rather than subtext to *La luna.*

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Kolker is equally responsive to Bertolucci's use of painters (Francis Bacon in *Last Tango,* Magritte in *The Spider's Strategem*). Kolker finds Bertolucci, at his best, playing a multitude of discourses, one against another, in such fashion that their very discordances echo visions like the soundless screams of Bacon and the impossible congruities of Magritte.

The author sees *1900* marking the end of a trajectory mounted in *Before the Revolution:* apparently conventional, using convention to costume a celebration of socialism and a defiant narrative expansion in the 320-minute version. If his arguments emerge robust out of contemporary theoretical premises, one may yet question some of the equations which underlie this fine study. One is between "melodrama" and ideology, a proposition common to analysis since Douglas Sirk was first discovered as a closet subversive. The reasoning hinges on melodrama's identification with a particular collection of value-laden capitalist encumbrances. In fact, unless one sides with Godard ("*Battleship Potemkin* calling *The Searchers*"), as Bertolucci does not, melodrama as a form is morally neutral. Historically, it has supported socialism and populism, the misused and the oppressed, quite as fully as it has endorsed private enterprise and the repressive, Technicolored American family. Stanislavsky trained his students in melodrama. Before formalism fell from favor in the Soviet Union, melodrama held the interest of both directors and theoreticians. *1900* rests comfortably in a tradition as venerable as *The Factory Lad* (1832). By these standards, *1900* hardly subverts Hollywood epic with socialism; it simply loads the confrontational structure with class-based antipathies.

When Olmo, the socialist leader, persuades his peasant fellows to lay down their arms, Kolker finds the ending of *1900* unsatisfactory. It reverts to Oedipal process, a preoccupation of Bertolucci's that Kolker discovers to be alternately useful for hermeneutic unravelings and frustrating because of its unflexible containments. "In effect, he cuts short the revolutionary movement and acts as the castrating father by having them give up their guns." (199) This judgment is surprising because only shortly earlier in the book Bertolucci himself connects Olmo to Primo (*The Tragedy of a Ridiculous Man*), once a partisan, now a factory owner. "In a certain sense, Primo is Olmo, forty years later. He is the father who has become the boss, a boss who is a partisan, a communist and a farmer." (192) Kolker is impatient with reductionist psychoanalytic readings of sexuality and fascism in *The Conformist* and applauds Althusser's efforts to tie Freud to Marx with a Lacanian knot, but an earlier onetime Marxist, onetime Freudian, Wilhelm Reich, explained Olmo and Primo succinctly in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism.* The authoritarian personality knows neither class nor economic boundaries. —JOHN FELL

MUSIQUE FANTASTIQUE

A Survey of Film Music in the Fantastic Cinema

By Randall D. Larson. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1985. $39.50.

Musique Fantastique is an exhaustive survey of a certain extremely evocative genre of film scoring, music for fantasy films or, to borrow the French phrase, music for the *cinéfantastique.* But since author Randall D. Larson, editor and publisher of the film music journal *Cinemascore,* maintains an extremely broad definition of the genre which encompasses horror, sci-fi, and even serials from the silents through the eighties, and also since the fantasy genre has been a pervasive force in cinema, frequently enlisting the services of most major "mainstream" Hollywood composers since the silent era, *Musique Fantastique* is also a thorough and interestingly documented history of film music in general. Larson seems to understand both the general and specialized aspects of his subject, and that the approach to scoring a horror film actually differs very little from scoring any other kind of film. In Larson's opening chapter, which provides a brief, introductory overview of the subject, the author quotes composer Ernest Gold's comment: "You don't categorize. You simply take the picture for what it is at its own level, and you try to deal with it the best way you know how." After Jerry Goldsmith's comment that "Dramatic content dictates the nature of the music," Larson emphasizes: "It is important to keep this in mind when studying a specialized area of film (such as this), so that the work of the composers in question

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Throughout Larson maintains this perspective while frequently suggesting that if there is any specific characteristic of *musique fantastique* which sets it aside from other film music, it is the stylistic freedom the genre offers its composers. Thus it is somewhat ironic that what is sometimes considered a juvenile and somewhat maligned branch of cinema (and deservedly so within the current decade) has still frequently allowed composers the freedom to experiment with and utilize the most advanced musical styles and even avant garde techniques, from the ahead-of-its-time electronic score for *Forbidden Planet* by Louis and Bebe Barron (one-time collaborators of John Cage) in 1956, to the modernistic and frequently atonal and/or serialized sections of scores by more recent composers such as Goldsmith and Pino Donaggio, among others.

Larson's premise and structure is a chronological, historical one. Several chapters spread throughout the book deal with the output of specific decades, from the silent era to the contemporary, providing lots of detailed documentation on most of the composers and their films of the period, as well as discussing evolving trends and techniques in both the genre in general and scoring in particular. Intercut with these historical chapters are others on the output of individual composers such as Herrmann, Goldsmith, and Williams who made especially important contributions to the fantasy genre, and chapters which deal with certain specialized subdivisions of the field, such as the Japanese Godzilla *et al.* films, the British Hammer school of horror, and Les Baxter's cult scores for Roger Corman and AIP. To round out his very thorough exploration of this (to many) terra incognita Larson also includes specific chapters devoted to the most important television manifestations of his subject, and on the use of electronic and classical scoring.

All of the chapters include frequent and often extended quotations from a wide range of authors and those quotes and all other sources are conveniently cited in profuse footnotes included at the end of each chapter. The last 250 pages of the volume are given over to filmographies, discographies, appendixes, and indexes.

Aficionados of the *cinéfantastique* will no doubt find *Musique Fantastique* of most vital interest, especially since music is, as Larson frequently points out, such a crucial adjunct to the total impact, power, and credibility of many genre works. Most devotees have their particular favorites and, chances are, no matter how obscure or perverse, *Musique Fantastique* will be a (if not *the* most) valuable resource in tracking down musical background on their favorite obsession. And much of the book is, at least for buffs, just plain fascinating reading, as compulsively addictive as eating popcorn. I was especially enlightened to find out that the composer of *Queen of Outer Space* (Marlin Skiles) and I share the same hometown of Harrisburg, PA, and the book is crammed with similar minutiae. But it's also gratifying to find sections on such unsung work as Georges Auric's music for all of Cocteau's films and Jack Clayton's *The Innocents,* and Larson provides ample data on similar classy classics as well.

Musique Fantastique can certainly be approached as a genre buff's *Grove's Dictionary,* but it's more than just a detailed survey, it's also a thorough and well-documented history of both a colorful genre of cinema and a well thought-out exploration and explanation of one specialized aspect of that genre's potent and persistent impact, executed with the contagious enthusiasm of the fanatic buff and the attention to detail and documentation of the dedicated sholar. —ROSS CARE

ROGER CORMAN

By Gary Morris. Boston: Twayne, 1985.

In his introductory chapter, Morris supplies an H. P. Lovecraft excerpt, citing an Edmund Wilson essay as source. The quote intends to illustrate Roger Corman's antipathy toward natural order, i.e., "Time, space, and natural law hold for me suggestions of intolerable bondage, and I can form no picture of emotional satisfaction which does not involve their defeat . . ." In truth, Wilson was no Lovecraft fan ("The only real horror in most of these fictions is the horror of bad taste and bad art"), and the quote really continues a little farther: "—especially the defeat of time, so that one may merge oneself with the whole historic stream and be wholly emancipated

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An incomplete citation is hardly earthshaking. Most of us drop selective references without remorse. More to the point is Morris's argument that Corman, by implication like Lovecraft, is a force to be reckoned with, that the auteur of *Viking Women and the Sea Serpent, Naked Paradise, Teenage Caveman* and *A Bucket of Blood* nurses some hidden agenda, indeed that Corman's artistry exceeds Bogdanovich, Coppola and Scorcese, his former employees.

Morris proposes that Corman's untypical producing-financing skills placed him in a unique, free-swinging position to manipulate generic modes toward subversive ends. Supporting Morris's thesis are several arguments: aesthetic (low-budget bleakness as psychological ambiance, color to betray a rotten, overripe, decayed world); personal, even autobiographical values (withdrawal from conformist society, the artist isolated, innocence violated, powerful and ardent females); psychological preoccupations (fear of death, morbid sexuality, anxiety, obsessions). The oeuvre culminates in the sixties Poe series, where higher budgets bought the director time and resources to exploit Floyd Crosby's roving camera, Daniel Haller's art designs, and the histrionics of Vincent Price.

The Corman politique started in 1970 in an Edinburgh Film Festival anthology (Paul Willemen, David Pirie and Lynda Myles, *Roger Corman: The Millenic Vision*), a collection bulging with philosophic and anthropological niceties, however obscure. Morris's posture is rendered more openly vulnerable by its confident assertions. Corman's disinclination to direct actors is a withdrawal "from overt manipulation," "another paradigm for the quest for meaning." CinemaScope is "a closed artistic construct, a patently false, unreal world in which even the dimensions of the space the characters inhabit are controlled." Black-and-white "signifies the entrapment of the ego, and by extension, death." Freeing a person from a coffin "is a flawless metaphor for the attempt by an individual to resolve the mind-body conflict by setting free the mind/soul/spirit from the bondage of a body, which must decay and die."

At this point in time, as Twayne and G. K. Hall continue to produce director studies, one may wonder whether authors ought not to be pressed to admit greater relevance to other ideas respecting film authorship, for example, to such efforts as appear in John Caughie, ed., *Theories of Authorship* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) which positions contradictory notions inherent in genre theory, cinestructuralism, feminism and semiology. There are certainly other ways to approach the phenomenon of Roger Corman, whose latest ventures as producer-distributor include *Barbarian Queen* ("No Man Can Touch Her Naked Steel") and, most recently, *Streetwalkin'*. One source would be E. C. Comics' *Tales From the Crypt*. Its demise in 1954 coincides with Corman's first productions, and everything is there—color, gore, *mise-en-scène,* story, character and overacting. —JOHN FELL

ASTAIRE DANCING
The Musical Films

By John Mueller. New York: Knopf, 1985. $45.00

Once in a while, a scholarly approach to interpretations of lyric cinema reveals that the work is truly a labor of love. John Mueller's scrupulous attention to all of the filmed dance numbers of Fred Astaire's career is a very enlightening process, one which might even astonish Astaire himself with its thoroughness. The book itself is lavishly illustrated with frame enlargements of the dances, and there are brief observations on the synopses and backgrounds of the films. Although Mueller's devoted admiration for the great dancer is clear, he has some occasionally tetchy summations of Astaire's dance partners. Ginger Rogers cannot be faulted, it seems, and certainly she made a great artistic contribution to the RKO period of Astaire's screen career, but in this section of the book, Mueller cannot rival in language the crisply brilliant descriptions in Arlene Croce's earlier work on the Astaire-Rogers films. However, his descriptions of all of the other films are invaluable, since such works as *Second Chorus,*

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The Sky's The Limit and *Let's Dance* are usually ignored. Mueller is grossly unfair to the excellences of Lucille Bremer and Vera-Ellen, ignoring the deliberately mannered stylizations of the former and the athletic grace of the latter; his tastes are somewhat intractable and puzzling because he *likes* Paulette Goddard's exceptionally odd dancing in her only film with Astaire, while criticizing Audrey Hepburn's special grace in *Funny Face.* Mueller apparently cannot abide too much sly wit or chic in Astaire's partnered adagios, and his analyses of the glorious dances of Astaire with Eleanor Powell (whom he calls "steely") have a slightly begrudging tone. All of Astaire's solos are dealt with brilliantly, and here Mueller serves his hero best. One might find "I Wanna Be A Dancin' Man" much more symbolically moving today, now that Astaire has retired, and there is regret to see how many dances were cut from his films. However, Mueller has created a valuable, rich collection, not only for devotees of screen dancing, but for the continuous perusal of the Astaire legend: the lyric hero personified.

—ALBERT JOHNSON

HOLLYWOOD DESTINIES
European Directors in America, 1922-1931

By Graham Petrie. London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985. $29.95

Hollywood Destinies is an eminently informative cross-cultural study that reclaims and restores the visions of the most innovative era in motion picture history. Petrie's subject is the first great invasion of Hollywood by foreign film talent in the twenties—in his account less an aggressive assault on the part of overseas directors than a calculated seduction by American producers wary of European competition. There were precious few foreign box-office sensations in twenties America, but even studio executives weren't blind. The formal excellence of *Nosferatu* (1919), *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919) and *Passion* (1920) presented a serious potential threat, not so much to Hollywood's domestic as its international market. To forestall the challenge, the American studios went after the best of the up-and-coming Europeans, luring them with lucrative production contracts and the assurance of exceptional artistic freedom.

Although Petrie is not one to overlook the career of an intriguing filmic footnote, the main focus is the American experience of four classy imports: F. W. Murnau, Ernst Lubitsch, Victor Sjöstrom, and Mauritz Stiller. Of the group, only Lubitsch, he of the famous "touch" and fluid camera movements, was able not only to survive but thrive within the Hollywood studio system. Beginning with the widely influential *The Marriage Circle* (1924), he blended scandalous situations, permissive sensibility, and Production Code finales into entertainment that somehow reconciled Old World élan and New World earnestness. Lubitsch, Petrie observes dryly, early learned "to make sure either that his probings into controversial territory were susceptible to multiple interpretations . . . or could be laughed off as essentially frivolous and light-hearted."

Unfortunately, most of Lubitsch's fellow emigrés lacked his cross-cultural dexterity. Brought to Hollywood by Fox Film Corporation on the strength of *The Last Laugh* (1924), the brilliant German Expressionist Murnau managed only one moderate box-office success, the classic *Sunrise* (1927), before "creative differences" impelled him towards the South Seas with documentary pioneer Robert Flaherty.

The experience of Stiller, director of the estimable *Erotikon* (1920), was similarly terminal. After a remarkably creative career in his native Sweden, Stiller came stateside at the behest of MGM and was promptly cut to ribbons by the studio's big knives. Ill-served and plagued by ill-health, Stiller returned home, to die, in 1928.

Sjöstrom fared somewhat better. Doubtless most familiar to today's art house regulars as the venerable Professor Borg in Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* (1957), Sjöstrom was a master behind the screen as well. He had the usual squabbles with studio management, and ultimately left Hollywood for good in 1930, but he left behind at least three splendid legacies: *He Who Gets Slapped* (1925), a disturbing melodrama featuring Lon Chaney as a masochistic circus performer; an atmospheric version of *The Scar-*

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—THOMAS DOHERTY

REFLEXIVITY IN FILM AND LITERATURE
From *Don Quixote* to Jean-Luc Godard

By Robert Stam. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1985. $39.95.

Like Raymond Durgnat, Stam is an intellectual omnivore, and his writing is a highly stimulating blend of social, psychological, and aesthetic concerns. He leaps from film to film with Durgnatian insouciance, drawing upon bizarre examples like the Brazilian porn-parody, *Tropical Fruit,* to illuminate "the intersubjective textual relation," or upon well known studio-financed films (*French Lieutenant's Woman, Lolita*) to illustrate how film can draw upon "temporalities simply not available to any purely linguistic medium." But the main concerns of the book center around the endlessly perplexing and fertile issues raised by Godard. In a characteristic section, which follows a graceful analysis of voyeurism in *Rear Window,* Stam begins with Ferdinand and Marianne making love by the roadside in *Pierrot le fou,* alludes to the bathtub-on-the-screen in *Les Carabiniers,* relates the orgy account in *Weekend* to Milton's *Paradise Lost,* notes parallel exorcisms of the erotic in sound that occur in *British Sounds* and *Tout va bien,* and after a few references to other films gets into a close analysis of the opening of *Contempt.* His writing is full of cross-references, *aperçus,* and ingenious comparisons. Like much of Durgnat's, it is constructed by a process of accretion, so that one theme attracts around it a host of others; they all interpenetrate and reflect upon each other, rather in the manner of the self-reflexive films that are Stam's subject. Hence it tends to defeat straight-through reading; there is no orderly series of "points" which are being developed sequentially; the real point, indeed, is that all such points interconnect and can only be put into a linear argument by artificial forcing. Naturally enough, this method is especially successful with films like *Jonah Who Will Be 25 in the Year 2000*—which orchestrates, as Stam puts it, "a dialectical music of ideas." It would be interesting to read Stam in alternate chapters with Bruce Kawin's *Mindscreen,* so that the brisk and orderly exposition of Kawin would reflect back and forth with the leisurely circlings of Stam.

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DREAMS OF DARKNESS
Fantasy and the Films of Val Lewton

By J. P. Telotte. Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985. $18.95.

Critics James Agee and Manny Farber were among the first to latch onto producer Val Lewton's nine RKO thrillers, and the latter remain a collective high point in horror cinema. In films like *Isle of the Dead* (1945) and *The Seventh Victim* (1943), the horrific is not just another ugly face. There's a philosophical dimension to Lewton's films, a dimension which yields, at its sharpest, the authentic sense of melancholy of *The Seventh Victim;* at its dullest, the comparison of life to a plastic ball in a fountain's spout in *The Leopard Man* (1943). The subject of Lewton's life and

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Critics James Agee and Manny Farber were among the first to latch onto producer Val Lewton's nine RKO thrillers, and the latter remain a collective high point in horror cinema. In films like *Isle of the Dead* (1945) and *The Seventh Victim* (1943), the horrific is not just another ugly face. There's a philosophical dimension to Lewton's films, a dimension which yields, at its sharpest, the authentic sense of melancholy of *The Seventh Victim;* at its dullest, the comparison of life to a plastic ball in a fountain's spout in *The Leopard Man* (1943). The subject of Lewton's life and

let Letter (1926) with Lillian Gish; and *The Wind* (1929), a visually stunning blend of "social realism and symbolic landscape" shot on location in the Mojave Desert. Justifiably, on the basis of Sjöstrom's American output alone, Petrie ranks him "firmly among the major directors of the silent period."

Though a fresh appreciation of the generally respected but usually misinterpreted silent work of a Sjöstrom or Lubitsch is always welcome, *Hollywood Destinies* may be most valuable as an inducement to further research in the field. Petrie initiates a discussion that pleads for elaboration, particularly on fascinating but largely forgotten figures like Benjamin Christensen (*Mockery*), Paul Leni (*The Man Who Laughs*), and Paul Fejos (*Broadway*). It is a challenge not to be taken up casually. Save for the silent comedies and a handful of revival house standards, merely *seeing* the movies is a major difficulty. For the serious student the obstacles are downright intimidating: inaccurate sourcebooks, bad prints of available films, incomplete films, unavailable films, presumably "lost" films, and *really* lost films. An archival nightmare, silent film scholarship is two-thirds detective work. But, as Petrie convincingly demonstrates, the treasures are out there, waiting for discovery.

—THOMAS DOHERTY

REFLEXIVITY IN FILM AND LITERATURE
From *Don Quixote* to Jean-Luc Godard

By Robert Stam. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1985. $39.95.

Like Raymond Durgnat, Stam is an intellectual omnivore, and his writing is a highly stimulating blend of social, psychological, and aesthetic concerns. He leaps from film to film with Durgnatian insouciance, drawing upon bizarre examples like the Brazilian porn-parody, *Tropical Fruit,* to illuminate "the intersubjective textual relation," or upon well known studio-financed films (*French Lieutenant's Woman, Lolita*) to illustrate how film can draw upon "temporalities simply not available to any purely linguistic medium." But the main concerns of the book center around the endlessly perplexing and fertile issues raised by Godard. In a characteristic section, which follows a graceful analysis of voyeurism in *Rear Window,* Stam begins with Ferdinand and Marianne making love by the roadside in *Pierrot le fou,* alludes to the bathtub-on-the-screen in *Les Carabiniers,* relates the orgy account in *Weekend* to Milton's *Paradise Lost,* notes parallel exorcisms of the erotic in sound that occur in *British Sounds* and *Tout va bien,* and after a few references to other films gets into a close analysis of the opening of *Contempt.* His writing is full of cross-references, *aperçus,* and ingenious comparisons. Like much of Durgnat's, it is constructed by a process of accretion, so that one theme attracts around it a host of others; they all interpenetrate and reflect upon each other, rather in the manner of the self-reflexive films that are Stam's subject. Hence it tends to defeat straight-through reading; there is no orderly series of "points" which are being developed sequentially; the real point, indeed, is that all such points interconnect and can only be put into a linear argument by artificial forcing. Naturally enough, this method is especially successful with films like *Jonah Who Will Be 25 in the Year 2000*—which orchestrates, as Stam puts it, "a dialectical music of ideas." It would be interesting to read Stam in alternate chapters with Bruce Kawin's *Mindscreen,* so that the brisk and orderly exposition of Kawin would reflect back and forth with the leisurely circlings of Stam.

—ERNEST CALLENBACH

DREAMS OF DARKNESS
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films sustained one full-length study, Joel E. Siegel's *Val Lewton: The Reality of Terror* (1973). But can the films alone sustain a book-length investigation?

No, J. P. Telotte's "Dreams of Darkness" would suggest—at least not such single-minded investigation. Telotte makes films like *Curse of the Cat People* (1944) and *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943) sound like flawless, perfectly realized aesthetic machines: punch in theme, character, performance, and (ping!) out comes art. Siegel's contrasting picture of the nine Lewtons as fascinating, hit-and-miss affairs seems more accurate, more honest. His analysis of Lewton is not as high-toned as Telotte's, but it's more balanced. Siegel even has the temerity to offer a word or two of criticism of Simone Simon's haunting performance in the first Lewton, *Cat People* (1942): if, "visually," she is "perfect," dramatically, she seems less so. He is, as usual, right on the button.

Perversely and unerringly, Telotte zeroes in on the most obvious weaknesses in Lewton's films and transforms them into strengths. The sloppy conclusion of *Zombie* becomes ambiguity. The cavalier plotting of *The Leopard Man* becomes a "labyrinthine style." The dismayingly jarring recitation of the Lord's Prayer in *The Seventh Victim* is transformed into "a fitting demonstration of the way in which myth and religion have always furnished a fundamental point of unity for the different impulses which drive the individual." Mrs. St. Aubyn's anti-climactic death by falling in *Isle of the Dead*—the expedient equivalent of having a character run over by a truck (there are no motor vehicles on this island)—becomes a demonstration of "the consequences of man's failure to unite" culture and nature. And (in the same film) does the concluding shot of hero and heroine being rowed off and away together indicate (as it seems), simply, a conventional happy ending —or "the Jungian shadow, the projected dark side of human nature . . . [being] joined to a persona and anima in a proper psychic harmony"? (The image of Cerberus superimposed over the above shot qualifies, somewhat, the conventionality of the ending, but Marc Cramer's Oliver Davis is a bit too facilely drawn to bear much psychological—or mythic —weight.)

Lewton's Hollywood "B" unit obviously, occasionally, had to make do. And, occasionally, it did splendidly—with, for instance, its actors: memorable are Boris Karloff (in *Isle of the Dead,* 1946's *Bedlam,* and 1945's *The Body Snatcher*), Richard Dix (surprisingly good in the 1943 *The Ghost Ship*), Simone Simon (in the *Cat People* films), Jean Brooks (in *Seventh Victim*), Sir Lancelot (in *Zombie* and *Curse of the Cat People*), and Elizabeth Russell (in the *Cat People* duo and *Seventh Victim*). But for every sterling performance by Karloff, there seem to be two by Kent Smith (struggling with the bland "normal" characters in Lewton's off-normal world), Dennis O'Keefe, Hugh Beaumont, or Kim Hunter (the latter unpromising in her first film role, the former pretty bad, in *Seventh Victim*).

Dialogue in the Lewtons is more often miss than hit: "How can anything bad come from goodness?" (*Isle of the Dead*); "This is a sad place" (*Zombie*); "The women I see are happy; they make their husbands happy; they lead normal, happy lives" (*Cat People*). (The latter one of Simone Simon's unhappier lines.) That the Lewton films are so doggedly concerned with the subjects of happiness and unhappiness—at least through *Isle of the Dead,* the third-to-last—is partly what makes them so fascinating; that they announce their themes is annoying. Telotte makes a convincing case for the intent behind the several "narrating voices" of *Zombie*—they suggest, to him, "an infinite number of voices, speaking versions of reality whose full range we might never grasp." Unfortunately, most of the voices are speaking in pat phrases like "decent, normal thinking," "a sad place," "Paul's great weapon—words," etc. The only distinctive voice belongs to Sir Lancelot, whose insinuating calypso can, incidentally, also be heard in *Zombies on Broadway,* a 1945 semi-sequel to *Zombie* (featuring Sir Lancelot singing-telling, again, of the island of San Sebastian) and 1957's *The Unknown Terror.* The ostensibly-innocent-outsider plots of *Seventh Victim, Zombie,* and *Bedlam* suggest that *The Third Man* is the film that Val Lewton might have made had he possessed—in addition to the talent and imagination which he did possess—a writer, a budget, and time.

Telotte proceeds as if the partly fulfilled

ambitions of the Lewtons were wholly fulfilled. The heavy ammo here includes frequently repeated words like "absence," "individuation," "repetition," "vesperal," "unsettling," "subversive," "dark," and "deep" (and variations thereof). His favorite critic's word, however, is "complex," or "complexity," which, he asserts, all Lewton's films are and have. Whether they are or aren't, have or have not, the insistence is offputting. One wants to be shown, not told. Telotte has valid points to make about *Isle of the Dead* (and its underpinning in myth), *Zombie,* and even ratty old *Leopard Man.* But his thinking, from chapter to chapter, is often as repetitious as his vocabulary: "the most confusing yet common path which man has to traverse lies within, in the mind itself" (p. 68); "we often generate from within . . . our own monsters (p. 145); "those more unsettling horrors that come from within" (p. 167). Perhaps if he'd gotten it right the first time. . . .

—DON WILLIS

CANNED GOODS AS CAVIAR

By Gerald Weales. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

The intention of Film Appreciation has always been to make a given body of film more accessible to an audience. Its limitations are obvious: the exclusivity of film sources, the reductive effective on methodologies, the superficiality of film buffery, cultural and political implications of the concept itself. The promise and utility of Film Appreciation depends on a writer's or teacher's depth of background, expository skills and often the tone with which enthusiasm is expressed.

Gerald Weales's introduction makes passing nods to auteurism and genre study and then enlists in eclectic ranks. Really, the book represents, in its best sense, what is often dismissed as Film Appreciation. It's distinguished by an exceptional familiarity with Hollywood, impressive recall and indefatigable research, the whole presented in literate, entertaining prose.

Subtitled *American Film Comedies of the 1930s, Canned Goods as Caviar* singles out a dozen familiar titles, but its subject seems really to be the actor's mask as it commutes from film to film. Where the comic is star, a chapter contains its subject (*City Lights, She Done Him Wrong, Duck Soup, It's a Gift, Steamboat Round the Bend*). Where context defines performance, there is greater emphasis on story structure and on narrative consistencies. Script and director figure more centrally: *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town, My Man Godfrey, Libeled Lady, Nothing Sacred, Bringing Up Baby, Destry Rides Again.*

A professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania who reviews theater in *Commonweal,* Weales has a masterful familiarity with thirties supporting players, an eye for comic business, and an blessedly clean, clear descriptive prose style. In consequence, we are reminded to distinguish Stepin Fetchit from Willie Best and Mantan Moreland, how to frame a role with posture and expression (Carole Lombard, Fritz Feld), how to capitalize on vocal timbre (Jean Arthur, Walter Connolly). Periodic rundowns appear on players like Berton Churchill, Jean Dixon and Dewey Robinson.

Characteristically, this kind of approach, especially from a theater person, investigates roots of formulaic film in popular drama, a tack emphasized when *My Man Godfrey* falls into five subspecies and antecedents (the Batty Family, The Mysterious Stranger . . .) or Fields's comedic debts to earlier vaudeville routines are conjugated. History is full of odd information. The midget who hit Frederic March on the leg in *Nothing Sacred* pulled the curtain on the undressed chorus girls in *Gold Diggers of 1933.* Leila Hyams, who sings "Pretty Baby" in *Ruggles of Red Gap* and is menaced by Dr. Moreau's experiments in *Island of Lost Souls,* was the first actress to warn us about "halictosis" in the Listerine ads.

Thoroughly appreciative, I can only shake a finger at Weales's *Bringing Up Baby* chapter, where he seems to be torn between avoiding and one-upping Stanley Cavell. He doesn't have to do either.

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HOLLYWOOD FROM VIETNAM TO REAGAN

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This is Robin Wood's first major work on the Hollywood cinema since his "conversion" in the late seventies from a "bourgeois-human-

ambitions of the Lewtons were wholly fulfilled. The heavy ammo here includes frequently repeated words like "absence," "individuation," "repetition," "vesperal," "unsettling," "subversive," "dark," and "deep" (and variations thereof). His favorite critic's word, however, is "complex," or "complexity," which, he asserts, all Lewton's films are and have. Whether they are or aren't, have or have not, the insistence is offputting. One wants to be shown, not told. Telotte has valid points to make about *Isle of the Dead* (and its underpinning in myth), *Zombie,* and even ratty old *Leopard Man.* But his thinking, from chapter to chapter, is often as repetitious as his vocabulary: "the most confusing yet common path which man has to traverse lies within, in the mind itself" (p. 68); "we often generate from within . . . our own monsters (p. 145); "those more unsettling horrors that come from within" (p. 167). Perhaps if he'd gotten it right the first time. . . .

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This is Robin Wood's first major work on the Hollywood cinema since his "conversion" in the late seventies from a "bourgeois-human-

ist" to a leftist critical position, and it seems sensible at this time to evaluate the premises of his writing and the direction of his career as critic. Wood has been savaged by both the right and the left: by the right for his "betrayal" of his bourgeois humanism, by the left for his ill-digested Marxist and Freudian theories. Conservative sectors of academia seem especially perplexed by Wood's turnaround, given his ardent defenses of humanist criticism (in *Film Comment* and elsewhere) against the Marxist, structuralist, and semiological approaches dominant in the film criticism of the last two decades. Much of the left has remained suspicious of Wood, at times viewing him as a convert-turned-zealot or, more derisively, as a writer more influenced by changes in his personal life (his coming to terms with his homosexuality) than by a carefully reasoned reappraisal of his world view (the assumption, of course, is that the two are disconnected and cannot be reconciled).

There is little question that Wood remains one of the most intelligent film critics in the language. His new ideological stance is not only courageous (in the context of the eighties) but conducive to critical insights even more thoughtful and closely argued than his pivotal books on Hitchcock, Penn, Bergman, and Hawks. Wood's radical perspective serves as a firmer intellectual grounding than the impressionistic stance evident in his earlier work; his politics, sexual and otherwise, enact a fulfillment rather than disrupt the "promise" of this intellectual.

Apparently conscious of the left's accusations of dilettantism, Wood refers to himself as a "free-lance radical," admitting that he is far from a mastery of Marxist criticism. Wood's progressive impulses seem more important than such mastery, although this book suggests that his dialectical consciousness and knowledge of the field have advanced since the early essays which heralded his changing critical direction: he is now citing Barthes as well as Marcuse and Norman O. Brown, and shows at least a passing knowledge of Lacan and Althusser. What is remarkable about Wood's contribution is his successful incorporation of influences from his humanist beginnings (E. H. Gombrich) into his radical critical practice. This inclusive spirit, along with the clarity and precision of his prose and the accuracy of his research (this is one of the few film books of the season lacking in technical errors) makes Wood's effort refreshing and formidable, all the more so because of the relative dearth of radical voices in academics at the moment.

One disappointment is that there is little in this book, despite some revision and updating, that has not appeared elsewhere. The core of the book is made up largely of Wood's writing for *Movie, Film Comment,* and his contribution to the fine horror film monograph, *The American Nightmare.* What is useful here is the new theoretical framework he provides to these essays. Wood's thesis is that Hollywood in the sixties and early seventies began to reflect (in the hope of capitalizing on cynicism rather than advancing the public's ideological consciousness) the bankruptcy of patriarchy and capitalism in the face of Vietnam and Watergate. He sets up his argument nicely in a prefatory chapter on *The Chase;* this essay, a revision of a chapter from Wood's book on Arthur Penn, shows convincingly how the film is a kind of prelude to the "American apocalypse" Hollywood film cycle produced during the period Wood describes. A later chapter ("Papering the Cracks") demonstrates Hollywood's attempt to retrench as bourgeois society recuperates in the Reagan period. Wood's positive appraisal of *Heaven's Gate, Blade Runner,* and *The King of Comedy,* and his explanation of their box-office rejection (or abandonment by their respective production companies) in the regressive Spielberg-Lucas era are persuasive. His defenses of Cimino and Scorsese are especially forceful; what is troublesome is his total dismissal of Coppola ("pretentious and banal"), whose *Godfather* films, *The Conversation,* and *Apocalypse Now* at the very least constitute the same site of struggle Wood perceives in *The Deer Hunter* and *Taxi Driver.* Wood overlooks *Heaven's Gate's* debt to such "Marxist operas" as *Once Upon a Time in the West* and *1900,* and he is facile in rationalizing the egregious errors in Cimino's (admittedly interesting) films, but he apparently sees nothing but pomposity in a figure who certainly looms larger in the films of the seventies than Cimino (I say "apparently" since Wood doesn't bother to construct an argument). Wood's remark that a chapter on Cop-

pola would be roughly equivalent to his present chapter on Altman (a director he views with some contempt) is perplexing, given the very different sensibilities of these film-makers.

The most compelling aspect of this book—and the real evidence of the author's dialectical mind—is Wood's sense of film as cultural product. In this Wood's Marxism is far from vulgar, since he is concerned more with the degree to which an artwork projects progressive ideas rather than the intentionality, radical or otherwise, of its creator(s). Points of contention will undoubtedly remain vis-à-vis the "new" Robin Wood and that sector of the scholarly audience whose appreciation of the critic remains fixed on his humanist phase. Voices will cry: "But he likes *Mandingo*!" The clearest (and for some the most disturbing) departure for Wood is his abandonment of traditional aestheticism (not that such a critical posture held sway in his earlier work); Wood's politics have focused his writing more precisely on the ideas circulating within a particular work rather than its formal properties, although Marxism has obviously given him a clearer sense of the necessary synthesis of the two. That a successful artwork must suggest a critical attitude toward dominant ideology and favor social, economic, as well as intellectual progress is a definitive notion missing from even the most eloquent of Wood's earlier *hommages* to Western culture. With this new book we can await the further development of a particularly talented radical consciousness.

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Babbington, Bruce and Peter William Evans. *Blue Skies and Silver Linings: Aspects of the Hollywood Musical.* Dover, NH: Manchester University Press, 1985. $27.00. A series of close but lively readings of musicals, from *Gold Diggers of 1933* to *Hair,* combining formal and thematic considerations and incorporating more contemporary theoretical sophistication than has been usual in discussing musicals. —E. C.

Bazin, André (Jean Bodon, ed. and trans.). *Essays on Chaplin.* New Haven: University of New Haven Press, 1985. Bodon has rearranged and translated the short pieces on Chaplin that originally appeared in *Charlie Chaplin* by Bazin and Eric Rohmer; they exemplify, in brief compass, the agile leaps of Bazin's mind, but are not among his major statements. —E. C.

Bliss, Michael. *Martin Scorsese and Michael Cimino.* 1985. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1985. $25.00. Bliss's explications of Scorsese's films are intelligent and probe strenuously for the moral roots of the stories. His real passion, however, is reserved for a fierce defense of Cimino and particularly *Heaven's Gate,* to which about 40% of the text is devoted. The lesson he sees Cimino communicating is that "none of us can really help anyone else" . . . "withdrawal is (apparently) the only sensible mode of behavior." Bliss may be right that *Heaven's Gate* was betrayed by United Artists; but it still seems likely that Kael, in her succinct way, was closer to the mark when she said that Cimino has a movie director's eye even though he "may not be able to think straight." Unfortunately, when Bliss comes along to do his thinking for him, it's too late. —E.C.

Brode Douglas. *Woody Allen: His Films and Career.* New York: Citadel, 1985. $19.95. Brode offers readable and informed commentary on Allen and his work: an introductory chapter plus sections on each film (he's particularly good on *Love and Death,* which he rates high in the Allen *corpus*). Brode himself has a good-humored wit which does not try to compete with Allen's own. In his perspective, the real Woody (who says he has truly "Prussian discipline") finally achieved his apotheosis in *Broadway Danny Rose* by "becoming food"—having a deli sandwich named after him. Copiously illustrated, and a treat for Allen fans. —E.C.

Bruce, Graham. *Bernard Herrmann: Film Music and Narrative.* Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985. $44.95. Herrmann was probably the most innovative of all Hollywood composers. He avoided extended melody, often utilized spare and unusual instrumentation, and developed a practice of using short musical "cells" or "modules" which adapted well to the fragmented nature of film narrative. (He may have learned much of his approach through writing, as he said, music for "two or three thousand radio dramas.") Bruce writes about the functions of film music in a style that is readable by a relative musical ignoramus like myself. The opening section of the book expounds Herrmann's general methods, with many examples. Then Bruce turns to detailed analyses of the scores of *Vertigo* (one of Herrmann's lushest scores) and *Psycho,* giving running descriptions of the music and commenting on its psychological impacts. Much of this is rather pedestrian and would best be used with the films available on an editing table for close study; but it makes the scores comprehensible and accessible to critical thought. —E.C.

Chaillet, Jean-Paul and Elizabeth Vincent. *Francis Ford Coppola.* New York: St. Martins, 1985. $10.95. Translation of an intelligent journalistic account of Coppola's career, printed in magazine format. —E.C.

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Babbington, Bruce and Peter William Evans. *Blue Skies and Silver Linings: Aspects of the Hollywood Musical.* Dover, NH: Manchester University Press, 1985. $27.00. A series of close but lively readings of musicals, from *Gold Diggers of 1933* to *Hair,* combining formal and thematic considerations and incorporating more contemporary theoretical sophistication than has been usual in discussing musicals. —E. C.

Bazin, André (Jean Bodon, ed. and trans.). *Essays on Chaplin.* New Haven: University of New Haven Press, 1985. Bodon has rearranged and translated the short pieces on Chaplin that originally appeared in *Charlie Chaplin* by Bazin and Eric Rohmer; they exemplify, in brief compass, the agile leaps of Bazin's mind, but are not among his major statements. —E. C.

Bliss, Michael. *Martin Scorsese and Michael Cimino.* 1985. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1985. $25.00. Bliss's explications of Scorsese's films are intelligent and probe strenuously for the moral roots of the stories. His real passion, however, is reserved for a fierce defense of Cimino and particularly *Heaven's Gate,* to which about 40% of the text is devoted. The lesson he sees Cimino communicating is that "none of us can really help anyone else" . . . "withdrawal is (apparently) the only sensible mode of behavior." Bliss may be right that *Heaven's Gate* was betrayed by United Artists; but it still seems likely that Kael, in her succinct way, was closer to the mark when she said that Cimino has a movie director's eye even though he "may not be able to think straight." Unfortunately, when Bliss comes along to do his thinking for him, it's too late. —E.C.

Brode Douglas. *Woody Allen: His Films and Career.* New York: Citadel, 1985. $19.95. Brode offers readable and informed commentary on Allen and his work: an introductory chapter plus sections on each film (he's particularly good on *Love and Death,* which he rates high in the Allen *corpus*). Brode himself has a good-humored wit which does not try to compete with Allen's own. In his perspective, the real Woody (who says he has truly "Prussian discipline") finally achieved his apotheosis in *Broadway Danny Rose* by "becoming food"—having a deli sandwich named after him. Copiously illustrated, and a treat for Allen fans. —E.C.

Bruce, Graham. *Bernard Herrmann: Film Music and Narrative.* Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985. $44.95. Herrmann was probably the most innovative of all Hollywood composers. He avoided extended melody, often utilized spare and unusual instrumentation, and developed a practice of using short musical "cells" or "modules" which adapted well to the fragmented nature of film narrative. (He may have learned much of his approach through writing, as he said, music for "two or three thousand radio dramas.") Bruce writes about the functions of film music in a style that is readable by a relative musical ignoramus like myself. The opening section of the book expounds Herrmann's general methods, with many examples. Then Bruce turns to detailed analyses of the scores of *Vertigo* (one of Herrmann's lushest scores) and *Psycho,* giving running descriptions of the music and commenting on its psychological impacts. Much of this is rather pedestrian and would best be used with the films available on an editing table for close study; but it makes the scores comprehensible and accessible to critical thought. —E.C.

Chaillet, Jean-Paul and Elizabeth Vincent. *Francis Ford Coppola.* New York: St. Martins, 1985. $10.95. Translation of an intelligent journalistic account of Coppola's career, printed in magazine format. —E.C.

Currie, Hector. *Cinema, Drama, Schema.* New York: Philosophical Library, 1986. $14.95. Currie is an aficionado of numerology and of obscure connections generally. Here he delves into hidden geometrical meanings of the buildings at Delphi and discerns deep symbolism in the most trivial of shot elements (thus, in *M,* "three vertical bars of dotted light are reflected: the Scorpio form of 'M'—symbol of unbridled sensuality"). Currie uses Jungian and other mythological analysis to redeem *Blonde Venus* from the curse of camp, and argues that *Touch of Evil,* far from being the preposterous melodrama some contemporary critics thought it, is really "an alchemic rite of inversion." He also finds amazing connections in Antonioni, Godard, and various other film-makers. —E.C.

Fetherling, Dale and Doug Fetherling, eds. *Carl Sandburg at the Movies: A Poet in the Silent Era 1920–1927.* Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1985. $16.50. The poet wrote a film review column for the *Chicago Daily News,* sometimes in two-sentence paragraphs but sometimes in more connected forms. He had good sense at a time when most newspaper writing on film was pure puffery and there wasn't anything else. —E.C.

Kael, Pauline. *State of the Art.* New York: Dutton, 1986. Cloth, $22.50; paper, $12.95. A healthy percentage of the *New Yorker's* circulation is due to the presence of Kael's columns—this volume covers 1983–85. (With the impending retirement of editor William Shawn, with whom she has always got on famously, publishing-trade gossip will wonder how she will fare with his successor.) The 1983–85 period, while a dubious one for "the state of the art," still seems to her to have produced "some pretty good pictures." —E.C.

Kline, Herbert. *New Theatre and Film: 1934–1937.* San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985. $13.95 (paper); $24.95 (cloth). About a quarter of this anthology from the Depression-era magazine concerns film. One remarkable piece, a brave exposé of columnist Louella Parsons and her Hearst connection, led editor Kline to a Hollywood visit in which he raised a lot of money from guilty consciences and fearful liberals (this was before the formation of the industry guilds). The critical pieces are not terribly brilliant, but the gutsy atmosphere of the "anti-fascist" period is well documented here. —E.C.

Lewis, Brian. *Jean Mitry and the Aesthetics of the Cinema.* Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1984, 1980. Mitry wrote a vast *Histoire du cinéma* (5 vols.) and a 2-vol. work, *Esthetique et psychologie du cinéma,* which tried to treat virtually all conceivable ways of thinking about the art, and hence ended up satisfying no one very well. Lewis attempts to impose order on the pre-Metzian chaos. —E.C.

Library of Congress: *Wonderful Inventions: Motion Pictures, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound at the Library of Congress.* Superintendent of Documents, US Government Printing Office, Washington DC 20402 (Stock No. 030-00109-1). $40.00. This very elegant piece of book-making brings together a collection of essays on a wide range of topics germane to items in the LC collections—from Malraux's *Sierra de Teruel* to David Raksin's music to D. W. Griffith (not to mention the approximately one-third of the volume dealing with radio and sound-recordings). Some of the chapters appeared earlier in the *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress,* but they have been revised and expanded. The illustrations and paper are lavish, but if Congress wants to spend money, far better on this than on more war toys for Caspar Weinberger. —E.C.

Michalczyk, John J. *Costa-Gavras: The Political Fiction Film.* Cranbury, NJ: Art Alliance Press, 1984. $39.50. Michalczyk takes a great deal of care in his descriptions of Costa-Gavras and his films, but makes certain that his admiration for the man does not distort his balanced critique of his films. For each work, the author addresses screen adaptation, editing and photography, characterization, music, and the critical reception at the first screening. Michalczyk also offers an articulate argument for political fiction as a legitimate film genre.
—MARILYN MATELSKI

Morrissette, Bruce. *Novel and Film: Essays in Two Genres.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985. $10.95 (paperback); $26.00 (cloth). Twelve essays by a well known Robbe-Grillet scholar.

Murray, Edward. *Fellini: The Artist* (2nd ed.). New York: Ungar, 1986. $12.95 paper. Adds coverage of four films made since the first edition in 1976—savaging all except *And the Ship Sails On.* —E.C.

Phillips, Klaus. *New German Filmmakers: From Oberhausen Through the 1970's.* New York: Ungar, 1985. $24.50 (cloth), $12.95 (paper). Seventeen essays on major and unknown directors. Carefully researched and documented, the essays offer thorough-going surveys of the directors' works—often with extensive recountings of film plots and themes, but with some stylistic analysis also. —E.C.

Polan, Dana B. *The Political Language of Film and the Avant-Garde.* Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985. Polan deploys the new methodological apparatus with unusual grace and perspicacity in this dissertation, which moves from Burch to Marx to Eisenstein to the American avant-garde and Oshima with consistent intelligence. —E.C.

Porter, Vincent. *On Cinema.* Dover, NH: Pluto Press, 1985. $6.75, paper. The condition of the Industry as viewed by a British insider: intelligent commentary on a not too savory business. —E.C.

Richter, Hans. *The Struggle for the Film: Towards a Socially Responsible Cinema.* New York: St. Martin's Press. 1976. $25.00. Written in the late thirties, this attempt by an avant-garde film-maker to understand the cinema politically and aesthetically is a curious blend—focused on the mass audience, but seeing the possibilities for artistically and socially valuable work through Brechtian strategies. Richter reworked the manuscript and published it in German in 1976, but it remains scrappy and mainly of historical-curiosity interest. —E.C.

Shipman, David. *Caught in the Act: Sex and Eroticism in the Movies.* North Pomfret, VT: Hamish Hamilton, 1985. $28.00. This latest entry in the eroticism-and-cinema tradition has a breathlessly enthusiastic style, but no particularly novel notions to interrupt enjoyment of the pictures. —E.C.

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Slide, Anthony (ed). *The Best of Rob Wagner's Script.* Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1985. $15.00. An intriguing anthology from the Hollywood paper (1929–1946) which Slide has rescued from oblivion. Real oddities: poetry by Chaplin (terrible) and Jessamyn West (mediocre), a story by Louis L'Amour (execrable), a skit by Ben Hecht (lively political fun, a Depression precursor of the Mime Troupe), a 1935 story by Saroyan about how nice it would be if Hitler were dead by summer, etc., etc. —E.C.

———. *Fifty Classic British Films: 1932–1982. A Pictorial Record.* New York: Dover, 1985. $9.95, paper. Credits, synopses, and thumbnail critical comments, plus extremely well printed and copious stills: *Rome Express* (1932) through *Gandhi.* Slide is not ashamed to like *Brief Encounter,* but he also recognizes the harsh power of *This Sporting Life.* —E.C.

Slusser, George E. and Eric S. Rabin, eds. *Shadows of the Magic Lamps: Fantasy and Science Fiction in Film.* Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985. $19.95. A collection of 14 essays, mostly by well known critics, ranging from Vivian Sobchack on the curious sexlessness of sci-fi films to Frank McConnell on "The Ontology of the Monster" to H. Bruce Franklin on "Don't Look Where We're Going" ("Not one of these fifty-one movies shows a functioning democracy in the future"). Lots of solid miscellaneous food for thought. —E.C.

Stedman, Raymond William. *Shadows of the Indian.* Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986. $14.95. Elegantly printed, this is a paperback of Stedman's 1982 survey of the distortions and projections visited upon Indians by white stereotyping—in comics, novels, films and TV. —E.C.

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Thompson, Frank, ed. *Between Action and Cut: Five American Directors.* Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1985. $22.50. Essays on Victor Fleming, William K. Howard, Roland West ("a fascinating director, a technical innovator, a second-rate writer, a master of mise-en-scène, a poor handler of actors and, possibly, a murderer"), Rowland Brown, and Charles T. Barton. Devoted research in the William K. Everson manner (he covers Howard). —E.C.

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INSIDE WARNER BROS. (1935-1951)

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Looking for amusement, one is reminded anew of the tenuous logic by which films now set in memory were cast. We might quite as easily have had Bette Davis in *Hollywood Hotel;* Cagney as Robin Hood and Knute Rockne; Paul Muni in *High Sierra;* Geraldine Fitzgerald as Brigid O'Shaunessy; Irene Dunne, Norma Shearer or Ginger Rogers in *Now Voyager;* Ronald Reagan and Zachary Scott in *Sierra Madre.* (Reagan would have played Curtin, who hesitates before saving Dobbs from the mine cave-in). We discover that *42nd Street* was regarded by the company as a musical exposé, apparently "suggested by" Florenz Ziegfeld. Cagney might have tried to break out of jail at the finish of *Angels With Dirty Faces.*

Read as primary source, various correspondences can amplify or correct previous interpretations, for example, some of those in the University of Wisconsin Press Warner's Screenplay Series. Behind George M. Cohan's back, his personal versions of *Yankee Doodle Dandy* were "egotistical epic," and the studio script was written overlong to win Cohan's approval and then face trimming. Apparently Bette Davis didn't sell Warners on *Dark Victory,* and scriptwriter Casey Robinson didn't pester the studio for its rights, at least not according to what's here. Walter MacEwen, an executive assistant to Hal Wallis, advised Wallis to pick it up as a vehicle for Kay Francis, and Basil Rathbone almost won the male lead. Olive Higgins Prouty, the novelist who wrote *Now Voyager,* had the idea of filming it with silent, intertitled flashbacks, but nobody paid any attention to her.

A 1940 memo from Wallis stirs other trains of thought. He is criticizing some of Raoul Walsh's *Strawberry Blonde* dailies, a scene where Rita Hayworth walks past a barber shop to appreciative stares and comments. I checked the movie footage, and it appears that Wallis neither describes the shots accurately nor succeeds in having them changed, but what emerges from the page is the energy of his concern. This is what we knew all along: a generation of Hollywood executives who were crude, ruthless and harried, sometimes wrong in their advice, sometimes surprisingly correct. Did they ever care about making movies! —JOHN FELL

THE JEW IN AMERICAN CINEMA

By Patricia Erens. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985. $27.50.

This book is an exhaustive survey and filmography that notes every American film since 1903 with something Jewish involved—an overt theme or character or word or mention or reference. As such, it will be a useful resource for researchers who might want to consider Jewish themes or images in American movies.

But the author's aim is a larger one; there is the sociological and cultural interpretation of the film data, and this dimension of the book is much more problematic than the film data part. The fundamental problem is an oversimple "reading" of film content as directly reflective of complex social and cultural realities, specifically the situation of Jews and Jewish culture and the attitudes of Jews and non-Jews about Jewish questions. Erens's analysis lacks intermediate explanation and analysis; it leaps from simple content descriptions of characters and plots to broad generalizations on the meaning of the content for expressing the author's descriptions of Jewish realities, historical and current.

Moreover, Erens shows little recognition of the actual social "micro-process," so to speak, that results in the actual movies we get to see. Her descriptions of well-known facts about studio heads and their ambiguous relationship to Jewish identity do not show a proper appreciation of the process by which many ideas get floated around, treatments and scripts are written and revised and rejected and rewritten; "appeal" is considered by producers; stars are hired and fired; directors improvise; projects are dropped; and so on. Finally, a relatively small number of films with some overt or suspected Jewish content or reference or mention or allusion gets made and released. They all count here, all with pretty much the same weight. The author offers no serious aesthetic analysis, no suggestion of what

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makes for outstanding qualities or depth in one film or another, even when they have similar surface content aspects and can go into the same category. (The analytic structure of the book operates with "trends," which neatly fit exact decade chapter divisions, utilizing a set of stereotypes like the Stern Patriarch, the neurotic son, the Jewish peddler, and so on. Erens states as the key assumption of the book that these types actually function in the films as expressions of latent attitudes in society. This is both unargued for and quite dubious.)

The central assumption is that the surface content of the films, at least the part relevant to Jews, is accurately expressive not just of unconscious attitudes in society (whose?) but also of the real world of Jews in America and of the range of real attitudes toward Jewish issues. This is seriously wrong, not just about the relation of commercial fiction films and Jews, but about movies in general. For example, many things could be said about Westerns, a much larger set of film documents than is available about Jews—but it would be very dubious to "read" Westerns as accurately reflecting the realities of cowboy life or Indian life of the late nineteenth century. By "reading" the content of the film data directly, one can't find out much of interest about Jewish realities. Which isn't to say that there is no connection between Jewish themes and characterizations and references in films and Jewish realities. Of course there is; and the connection in some odd case might even be an accurate reflection of something interesting. But neither simple reflection nor total phantasy could be read from the content of one or another actual film nor even from statistical observations and creation of stereotype categories. To read films sociologically—a legitimate enterprise, in theory—one needs a deep independent grasp of the complexities of Jewish life, community and history. (There would not be such a requirement for a "formal" reading of some of the very films that appear in this book if the critic didn't have an interest in the classification as "Jewish film" because something Jewish was mentioned, and just went ahead and looked at the film in terms of formal aesthetic criteria.)

Given the commitment of this study to reading the films as giving us insights into Jewish life and into attitudes, conscious and unconscious, toward Jews, it is not reassuring to notice how inadequate Erens's understanding of Jewish history and culture is. She has read secondary and tertiary sources on Jewish history; but her capsule pat summaries of complex and disputed issues are often misleading and uncritical. Accordingly, this reader became very mistrustful of even minor pronouncements on Jewish issues. A small, amusing and revealing example: early in the book, the author tells us of "two theatrical agents Eppus and Kibbitzer who appear in *Show Girl.* The words in Yiddish mean 'maybe' and 'busybody.'" Two hundred pages later, in her description of *The Big Fix,* she tells us that "Eppis, modeled on Abbie Hoffman, has been given the Yiddish name for 'Truth.'" Now, in the first use, the term for "maybe" is actually "efsher"; in the second, "eppis" means "something"; the term for truth is "emis," like the Hebrew word in the Yale seal.

Much more serious misunderstandings fatally weaken the substance of the analysis. The summary descriptions of Jewish life and mind offered by the author on her own authority, so to speak, are on the same level of reductive stereotype that she correctly criticizes in some films. A more paranoid (more sensitive?) reader than me might feel that her remarks sometimes express latent unconscious anti-Semitism or at least some superficial stereotyping. Three examples of what I mean: (1) Taking off from a quoted remark of critic Michael Wood which uses the word "alien" in discussing Marx Brothers humor (remember that the Marx brothers were nominally Jewish) the author pronounces: "It is this sense of alienation and otherness which has characterized the Jewish experience throughout history and which pervades their artistic expression whether in drama or comedy." What evidence is there for such a silly remark? Why assume that anyone who is nominally Jewish, no matter how integrated into the culture around them, will express a Jewish sense of alienation and otherness? Why should all creation by anyone Jewish be treated as having a single determined sense? (2) In discussing *I Love You, Alice B. Toklas,* the author comments on a line of one of the characters: "And proffering what must be the ultimate statement on

Jewish womanhood, she concludes, 'Women are built for hurt.'" This comment slides from a line of one character into an unsound generalization; nothing in the film makes a claim about Jewish group mind characteristics. (3) The author's summation of the popular *Where's Poppa?* is: "It also sets the tone for much of the humor to follow—an unremitting misogyny, characteristic of contemporary Jewish attitudes and reflecting a backlash born in the wake of the Women's Liberation Movement." Again, it is the author's sociological and cultural claims we are reading, and they lead to this insulting generalization about the real attitudes of real Jewish men (most? all? three?). Nothing in the film claims this sort of reflection and, of course, no movie should.

Unfortunately, these examples express the dominant mode of analysis: tendentious overreading of content treated as reflecting overgeneralized and inaccurate characterizations of Jewish realities. As a film and pop culture scholarship reference, the volume has a modest value; but it must be considered unsuccessful in its larger analytical ambitions.

—ALLEN GRAUBARD

JOHN GRIERSON AND THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD

By Gary Evans. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.

The National Film Board of Canada was created in the spring of 1939, the brainchild of John Grierson, a naturalized citizen of Scottish ancestry. Several months later, when the government of William Lyon Mackenzie King declared war against Nazi Germany, the NFB was pressed into action as a psychological weapon aimed at the hearts and minds of Canadians and the free world at large. For the duration of the conflict, it produced an impressive number of propaganda films at least as intellectually creative and technically artistic as any other made in either in the Axis or Allied camps, reaching a world-wide audience of 40–50 million viewers per week—a spectacular success by any stretch of the imagination.

The wartime history of the NFB under the direction of its brilliant if occasionally eccentric steward is the subject of this scholarly and endlessly vibrant study by Gary Evans. According to the author, Grierson saw World War II as a giant ideological "chess game" between Dr. Josef Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry and the free West—"a game whose winner would determine the alignment of loyalties and nations (perhaps) for centuries to come." (p. 8). From every indication, writes Evans, the NFB director was "a complex, idealistic mind at work on behalf of democracy." (p. 94).

The dominant thrust of the NFB's wartime responsibilities were featured in two major motion picture documentary productions, the *Canada Carries On* and the *World in Action* series. Taken together, the long string of films connected with these general classification headings examined every aspect of the global conflict—specially Canada's heroic participation in it. No subject matter was left unturned and topics included such items of interest as the rise and consequences of Adolf Hitler and the invaluable role of Canadian women—at home and in the factory—in the overall military effort.

The NFB's work was not without its problems or growing pains. Without question, the National Film Board's greatest failure was its inability or unwillingness to take up the plight of European Jews, a profoundly unfortunate omission that "casts doubts over Grierson's 'progressive' handling of information." (p. 181). For the most part, the NFB's messages were "propaganda without hate mongering" although some of its images of the Japanese enemy "hovered on the edge of racism." (pp. 164, 219).

The National Film Board's paramount desire to portray the importance of a common allied front against the fascist triumverate was essentially realistic and well meaning—except when it came to painting a naive and rosy picture of Stalinist Russia. In two particular films, *Our Northern Neighbour* and *Inside Fighting Russia,* references to communism or to the political differences separating Canada and the Soviet Union were conveniently deleted as part of a systematic campaign to highlight the harmony of interests which both nations shared in their determination to defeat the foe. This "gross oversimplification of

Jewish womanhood, she concludes, 'Women are built for hurt.'" This comment slides from a line of one character into an unsound generalization; nothing in the film makes a claim about Jewish group mind characteristics. (3) The author's summation of the popular *Where's Poppa?* is: "It also sets the tone for much of the humor to follow—an unremitting misogyny, characteristic of contemporary Jewish attitudes and reflecting a backlash born in the wake of the Women's Liberation Movement." Again, it is the author's sociological and cultural claims we are reading, and they lead to this insulting generalization about the real attitudes of real Jewish men (most? all? three?). Nothing in the film claims this sort of reflection and, of course, no movie should.

Unfortunately, these examples express the dominant mode of analysis: tendentious overreading of content treated as reflecting overgeneralized and inaccurate characterizations of Jewish realities. As a film and pop culture scholarship reference, the volume has a modest value; but it must be considered unsuccessful in its larger analytical ambitions.

—ALLEN GRAUBARD

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The sensational September 1945 defection of a Russian cipher clerk in Ottawa—who is purported to have told the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that he possessed a list of prominent and influential Canadians with communist leanings—coupled with the arrest by the RCMP of a former NFB employee five months later on charges of spying for the USSR, threw a dark shadow over Grierson and the entire National Film Board. Almost overnight, the NFB was discredited in the eyes of Canada's citizens, "losing whatever goodwill Grierson and his colleagues had built up over the war years." (p. 256). Although Grierson was never personally implicated in any spy scandal, the sordid revelations tarnished and all but effectively destroyed his reputation in one fell swoop.

Evans ends his book with a tribute to Grierson and the movement he led. Notwithstanding all his errors and shortcomings, "[a]ll he did was in the name of democracy. . . . His public life remains an example to those who believe that selfless devotion to a just cause is its own reward." —ANDRE KUCZEWSKI

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The book's most valuable contribution is the first chapter, which offers a synopsis of Bulgarian history from the Thracians forward, although Holloway tiptoes around the more appalling developments in the history of the Socialist Republic of Bulgaria that have struck newspaper readers. The standard problems with such books, however, is that the writer conceives of himself not as a film critic but rather as a promoter and thus undermines his whole purpose for the book. Holloway wants us to like Bulgarian cinema at all costs, which would not be a difficult problem if he would describe aspects of "poetic realism," which is called "magical realism" in the West when practiced by Fellini; that is the best and most intriguing thing the Bulgarian cinema has to offer. And it goes back a long way—to one of the first films, *Bay Ganyu,* with its irreverent absurdist edge in the opinions of a country bumpkin on civilization. When Bulgarian films incorporate folk traditions and ancient modes, they distinguish themselves as able to tap rather than try to *re*create the living sources of a culture that itself has many politico/religio/socio levels.

In the nineteenth century, many Bulgarians took themselves into exile and returned just in time for the birth of the cinema, bringing with them a humorous perspective on their own country and its village types. The populist (called "narodnik" here) traditions were ripe for the popular entertainment that cinema would represent, but the proverbial "trouble

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in the Balkans" inhibited the real development of an indigenous cinema until after World War II, when cinema became a tool to help forge a national identity of a socialist character. Hence the preponderance of "boy meets tractor" movies in Eastern Europe, not to mention reel after reel of patriotic anti-Nazi resistance.

Holloway reviews some of the more interesting films that have distinguished themselves through prizes or general appreciation, and a Bulgarian retrospective should obviously include *Kalin the Eagle, On a Small Island, Partisans, First Lesson, Sun and Shadow* from the fifties. Holloway notes that these films display the poetic realism of French cinema of the thirties; is there a reason for that? What films were the Bulgarian film-makers watching after the war? From the sixties and seventies, Holloway recommends *The Inspector and the Night, The She-Wolf, The Attached Balloon, The Peach Thief, Tsar and General, Iconostasis, Goathorn, The Last Word, Villa Zone, The Inspector and the Forest, Cyclops, Stars in Her Hair, Tears in Her Eyes, Advantage, The Unknown Soldier's Patent Leather Shoes, Barrier,* and then three grand historical epics. I can second all these recommendations, only because I have found them *interesting* but usually only in the context of Balkan cinema, not as individual works of art. The fact remains that Bulgarian cinema is antiquated in tone—and particularly when it is trying to be "modern." Holloway permits himself only one small criticism: "So long as one out of every two Bulgarians keeps queuing for the formula movie of old, directors will continue to make little distinction between jobs in the theater and at the studio."

Holloway wants to elevate Bulgarian productions in some imaginary collective world opinion, so he makes the mistake of overestimating the handful of prizes at minor festivals in 1977 by stating that the Bulgarian cinema "had captured major festival prizes as though apples were being picked from overloaded trees." If one contemplates the proliferation of festivals in the world, one might speak of overloaded trees, but this is not film criticism, it is hype. When one of Bulgaria's finest film-makers is invoked, Hristo Hristov, with his Berlin festival entry *The Truck,* it need also be said that Berlin always has more than its fair share of East Bloc films, but to compare it to *Wages of Fear* observes only the obvious and ignores the lack of tension and suspense in the Bulgarian film. Certainly, each East Bloc country has certain equivalents of phenomena in Western cinema, but they cannot be made interesting to Western readers unless those parallels are detailed and their differences used to paint a portrait of a society. Bulgaria is such an unknown quantity that this was an opportunity to sketch its attractions through its cinema.

The lack of any negative remarks on Bulgarian production makes Holloway's work extremely unbalanced. The brief remark that in 1983 the four film production "units" (like companies) were disbanded and production put under a double management hints at an increase in bureaucracy for supervisory purposes, so as better to control what is already in danger of being formulaic. Holloway mentions 20 co-productions with Bulgariafilm, but a few pages on the American/Bulgarian deal on a US version of *681 A.D.—The Glory of Khan* would clarify why nobody has ever done two coproductions there. Holloway offers an apology for "glaring mistakes" at one point; there are no glaring problems with this book except a sin of omission—the absence of a critical voice. —KAREN JAEHNE

SOVIET CINEMA IN THE SILENT ERA, 1918-1935

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The author gives due time to film history's usual luminaries, but her interest in the period's mainstream cinema equally foregrounds what might be called the second line of silent directors: Fridrikh Ermler, Abram Room, Grigori Kozintsev, Leonid Trauberg and Yakov Alexandrovich Protazanov. (If interested, one may find a concise compendium of Soviet directors and their films in Alexander S. Birkos, *Soviet Cinema.* Archon, 1976.) We also follow the fortunes of writer-critics like Ippolit Sokolov, Khrisanf Khersonskii and Viktor Shklovskii.

Soviet film history as most of us know it, probably largely through Jay Leyda, holds firm, although Youngblood will often add information. Where, for example, Leyda's *Kino* supplies sympathetic production details on Kuleshov's *Death Ray* and *By the Law,* Youngblood introduces negative, even denunciatory reviews. Room's *Bed and Sofa* was immensely successful abroad, but Russians criticized Room's coddling of socialist misfits, an ideologically undeveloped woman, and a "psycho-pathological story." Behavior in the purge years was dismal. Room denounced Pudovkin for his association with Kuleshov. Under pressure, Kuleshov denounced a critic, Mikhail Schneider, by reading a five-year-old personal letter in which Schneider praised *By the Law* and castigated its opponents.

A constant issue of money intensified many disputes. If a film was successful abroad, it catered to bourgeois decadence. If a film was artistically commended, it failed to communicate with mass audiences. (Most of the Russian "classics" were noticeably unsuccessful at the domestic box office). Radical departures like Vertov's had pseudo-revolutionary phraseology and monopolistic pretentions. When foreign films were imported, they corrupted the public. If they were restricted, less money came in for domestic production. In theory, films about peasants, industrialization and the revolution were commendable. In practice, the kulak was always fat and set fire to the cooperative. Bureaucrats kept angora cats and took bribes. White Russians danced the kazatsky. Filming classics like Gogol's "The Overcoat" failed sufficiently to socialize the old material. Portraying contemporary Soviet life on screen ran the risk of showing citizens insufficiently conscious politically. Comedies aped Western tricks. Documentaries sacrificed truth to individualistic purpose; a good case was made for Vertov's *One-Sixth of the World* lifting shots from other films—fiction and non-fiction—without permissions. Besides, it lost money.

An executive in the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Youngblood has constructed a convincingly researched historical study. She brings an exploring mind to early material, much fresh to most Western eyes. The only movie lapse noted is a description of Kuleshov's 1927 *Your Acquaintance* which is said to have a wonderful scene showing a protagonist, a reporter, walking about her lover's room as she touches familiar objects so as to impress them on her memory. It's the end of her love affair and cries for a footnote. Was Mamoulian putting Garbo through some Communist fantasy six years later in *Queen Christina*? —JOHN FELL

Balio, Tino, ed. *The American Film Industry* (rev. ed.). Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985. Six new chapters have been added in the revision of this standard resource.

Cowie, Peter. *Swedish Cinema.* The Swedish Institute, Box 7434, S-103, Stockholm, 1985. There's a lot to Swedish film besides Ingman Bergman, and Peter Cowie surveys it from 1909 to the time of *Fanny and Alexander* with his customary sagacity and attention to visual imagery. —E.C.

Dick, Bernard F. *The Star-Spangled Screen: The American World War II Film.* Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1985. $26.00. The (usually) well-meant silliness documented here makes you grateful for Hollywood's instinct to send messages by Western Union rather than the screen. It also shows how Hollywood almost always follows political trends at a safe distance rather than generating them. —E.C.

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A constant issue of money intensified many disputes. If a film was successful abroad, it catered to bourgeois decadence. If a film was artistically commended, it failed to communicate with mass audiences. (Most of the Russian "classics" were noticeably unsuccessful at the domestic box office). Radical departures like Vertov's had pseudo-revolutionary phraseology and monopolistic pretentions. When foreign films were imported, they corrupted the public. If they were restricted, less money came in for domestic production. In theory, films about peasants, industrialization and the revolution were commendable. In practice, the kulak was always fat and set fire to the cooperative. Bureaucrats kept angora cats and took bribes. White Russians danced the kazatsky. Filming classics like Gogol's "The Overcoat" failed sufficiently to socialize the old material. Portraying contemporary Soviet life on screen ran the risk of showing citizens insufficiently conscious politically. Comedies aped Western tricks. Documentaries sacrificed truth to individualistic purpose; a good case was made for Vertov's *One-Sixth of the World* lifting shots from other films—fiction and non-fiction—without permissions. Besides, it lost money.

An executive in the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Youngblood has constructed a convincingly researched historical study. She brings an exploring mind to early material, much fresh to most Western eyes. The only movie lapse noted is a description of Kuleshov's 1927 *Your Acquaintance* which is said to have a wonderful scene showing a protagonist, a reporter, walking about her lover's room as she touches familiar objects so as to impress them on her memory. It's the end of her love affair and cries for a footnote. Was Mamoulian putting Garbo through some Communist fantasy six years later in *Queen Christina*? —JOHN FELL

Balio, Tino, ed. *The American Film Industry* (rev. ed.). Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985. Six new chapters have been added in the revision of this standard resource.

Cowie, Peter. *Swedish Cinema.* The Swedish Institute, Box 7434, S-103, Stockholm, 1985. There's a lot to Swedish film besides Ingman Bergman, and Peter Cowie surveys it from 1909 to the time of *Fanny and Alexander* with his customary sagacity and attention to visual imagery. —E.C.

Dick, Bernard F. *The Star-Spangled Screen: The American World War II Film.* Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1985. $26.00. The (usually) well-meant silliness documented here makes you grateful for Hollywood's instinct to send messages by Western Union rather than the screen. It also shows how Hollywood almost always follows political trends at a safe distance rather than generating them. —E.C.

Dickinson, Margaret and Sarah Street. *Cinema and State: The Film Industry and the British Government 1927-84.* London: British Film Institute, distributed by University of Illinois Press, 1985. How the government saved, and then attempted to rejuvenate, its collapsing film industry. But the prognosis is gloomy. —E.C.

Eames, John Douglas. *The Paramount Story.* New York: Crown, 1985. $35.00. "Dear old Paramount," as Robert Bloch put it—home of Sternberg, Lubitsch, Leisen, Sturges, Wilder, Hope & Crosby, Martin & Lewis, Fu Manchu (the Warner Oland version), Bulldog Drummond, and—from 1954 to 1960—Hitchcock. All the Paramount features, old and new, dear and not-so-dear, are here, nearly 3,000 of them. Major releases get a full, newsy paragraph; minor, a brusque sentence. Very browseable. —DON WILLIS

Eyles, Allen, Robert Adkinson, and Nicholas Fry, eds. *House of Horror: The Complete Story of Hammer Films.* New York: Ungar, 1984. $8.95 paper. Rather perfunctory updating of a 1973 volume. Inclusion of the updating chapter, "Adapt or Die," is not even reflected in the table of contents, and Hammer's television work—which means, of course, most of their work the past decade—is mentioned only in passing. Sections on Hammer horror, 1955 to 1973; Hammer non-horror, for those same years; Hammer heroines (a pictorial); and pre-horror Hammer. The latter essay reminds us that the company's second film, *The Phantom Ship* (1935), starred—portentously—Bela Lugosi. (The film was, however, hardly the "lavish undertaking" this book would have it.) And Hammer, of course, did do some pre-*Curse of Frankenstein,* even pre-Quatermass dabbling in science fiction (*Spaceways, The Four-Sided Triangle, Dick Barton at Bay*), and in mystery/fantasy (*The Man in Black, Room to Let*). Includes interviews and a filmography. —DON WILLIS

Edwards, Gregory J. *The International Film Poster: The Role of the Poster in Cinema Art, Advertising and History.* Salem, NH: Salem House, 1985. $24.95. With the brief honorable exception of Saul Bass, Hollywood's posters have only camp interest, but this generous volume includes many color reproductions of graphically powerful work from other cultures, accompanied by an extremely informative and readable text. —E.C.

Fordin, Hugh. *The Movies' Greatest Musicals: Produced in Hollywood, USA by the Freed Unit.* New York: Ungar, 1984. $11.95 paper. Reprint of the 1975 study.

Goulding, Daniel J. *Liberated Cinema: The Yugoslav Experience.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985. $25.00. Yugoslavia's special fate is to be placed between the two great idiot power-blocks of East and West, and thus to both be able and compelled to utter pox upon both houses with a freedom the Poles can only envy. It earned this freedom through the unique fact that Tito and his partisans had liberated much of the country from the Nazi occupiers by midway through World War II—and were thus well placed to resist Russian domination after the war ended. But the postwar Yugoslav film industry had to begin from less than zero. Goulding provides a compact historical survey, then traces the evolution of Yugoslav film-making through heavy reliance on the "Eastern" genre of wartime epic to more sophisticated stories attempting to deal honestly with the ambiguities of life in the world's first supposedly worker-controlled economic system. The film industry loosened up to the point of permitting Dusan Makavejev to go beyond *Love Affair* to his passionate sexual-political masterpiece, *WR: Mysteries of the Organism,* after which he was silenced and had to work abroad. The ensuing freeze has recently thawed again, permitting intriguing films to emerge, such as *When Father Was Away on Business,* which have a distinctive morosely comic tone. Goulding's study is a good introduction to a cinema which may again produce some world-class films. —E.C.

Graham, Cooper C., *et al. D. W. Griffith and the Biograph Company.* Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1985. $27.50. Establishes a "production history" for Griffith's time at Biograph—where he functioned as a production supervisor as well as a director. Production credits, case, copyright date, etc. are listed for all the films, and indexes make it possible to track the work of individuals.

Jowett, Garth. *Film: The Democratic Art.* Stoneham, MA: Focal Press, 1985. $19.95, paper. Paperback edition of this ambitious and permanently valuable social history. —E.C.

Lowry, Edward. *The Filmology Movement and Film Study in France.* Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985. The post-World War II film fervor which gave us André Bazin and his *Revue du Cinéma,* and then *Cahiers du Cinéma* and *Positif,* also produced an academic flourishing of film studies at the Sorbonne: "the first major attempt to delineate, structure and institutionalize intellectual concerns regarding the cinema." Lowry's detailed and readable study offers interesting history in its own right, but also some intriguing parallels and contrasts with semiology and later film theory. —E.C.

Niver, Kemp R. *Early Motion Pictures: The Paper Print Collection in the Library of Congress.* Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, #030-001-00110-5, 1985. $24. A revision and updating of Niver's 1967 volume.

Perry, George. *The Great British Picture Show.* Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1974, 1985. $19.95.

This survey of the history and recent precipitous commercial decline of the British cinema is lamentably routine on the critical side but extremely informative on the business side. —E.C.

Quinlan, David. *British Sound Films: The Studio Years 1928–1959.* Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble, 1985. $35.00. Credits plus 60–100-word plot summaries for some 3,000 films.

Robertson, James C. *The British Board of Film Censors: Film Censorship in Britain, 1896–1950.* Dover, NY: Croom Helm, 1985. $29.00. In retrospect, censorial acts often seem curiously arbitrary, like Britain banning *La Chienne* and Pabst's French version of *The Threepenny Opera.* Today they're studied to evidence class-inflected social controls intended to insulate mass (i.e., working class) audiences from corruptions that readers and theatergoers (i.e., middle-class consumers) know how to perceive safely. This book constitutes a condensed, chronological account of the BBFC, which was created by the Home Office in 1913 to protect English film-makers and exhibitors from more official censorship. Like its American counterparts (and Will Hays visited Britain in 1923), the BBFC tried to balance demands of local authorities, parlimentary complaints, and industrial needs with some sense of public responsibility. With more or less vigor, shears descended on the risqué, the political and the violent in different periods. Lacking more definitive information, the book's weakness lies in its author's inability to do more than speculate about what parts of any film were in fact excised. There are occasional slips stemming from questionable readings or unfamiliarity. It's hard to think of *The Golem* as anti-Semitic (pp. 33, 98). Wilmer is just Wilmer, not Wilmer Cook in *The Maltese Falcon* (p. 137). *Whither Germany?* is German, not French (p. 96). Chester Morris's Boston Blackie was a good guy, not a baddie (p. 32); he just worked outside the law. —JOHN FELL

Shipman, David. *The Story of Cinema.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985. $50.00, cloth. Shipman is obviously a terribly determined chap—to try to cover the entire history of Western cinema (with short chapters on Japan and India and one grab-bag world chapter) in one volume, even if it does contain almost 1300 double-column pages. He's looking to unload a full cargo of opinions, in a chatty sort of way. So a great deal of the book has a crotchety side: he loathes Harold Pinter, and thinks Lindsay Anderson's *This Sporting Life* "hardly raised expectations" (harumph!). He disdains *Pixote* since "its details are so degrading

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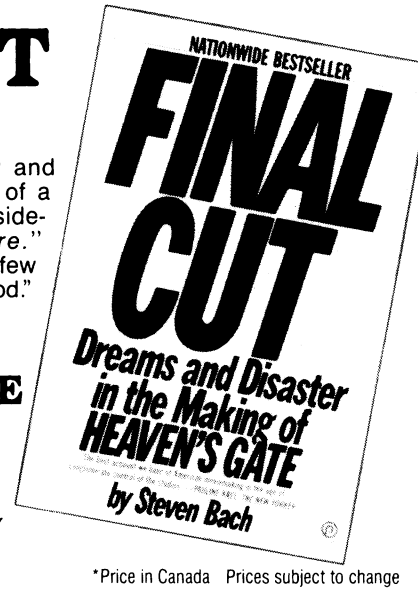

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as to suggest Babenco did first-hand research." It is a virtue of the book that Shipman only writes evaluatively about films he has actually seen, but in the case of Yugoslavia that seems to mean only three, which "offer a generally unsavory group of characters in an environment with which it is difficult to sympathize" (tut-tut!). His likes are also sometimes bizarre: *Smokey and the Bandit* is "one of the few good American films in the past few years," though "clearly a committee film, and manipulative, but fresh and spontaneous." In short, if you want to know how film history looks to a strong-minded and somewhat eccentric British gentleman whose favorite American film critic is John Simon, this is your cup of tea; no lemon needed, it's plenty astringent as it comes. —E.C.

Tarbox, Charles H. *Los Films, 1895-1917.* Los Angeles: Film Classics, 1983. $12.95. This amazing book goes to the very roots of the industry, or art, of the motion pictures and is a work of affectionate dedication. Tarbox has left no stone unturned going through the Eastman House in Rochester, the Edison House in New Jersey, the American Film Institute, the British Film Institute, the Library of Congress, the Australian National Library, the film archives of Paris, Copenhagen, Vienna . . . He estimates that about 30,000 films made from the new art's inception to the end of WWI were little known, unaccounted for, or completely lost. And of these he writes with loving involvement, in detail, giving facts, figures, supplying stills, posters, diagrams, designs, pictures. The illustrations alone —although not very well reproduced, alas, but quite functional—show the tenacity of a private eye. Tarbox has notes on Pancho Villa, Arthur Conan Doyle, Booker T. Washington, Montessori, Leon Trotsky, Eveline Pankhurst, Emma Goldman and Gaston Méliès (the lesser famous brother), who apparently had "a floating film studio through the American Southwest, and was fascinated by the Pacific." The book begins with *Over Niagara Falls—in 4 parts,* goes through the early Harry Lauder shorts, and the Famous Players and Lasky releases, up to *Fighting For France* and *Cavell Case—The Woman the Germans Shot* in the last days of World War I. The author does not concentrate on "feature" or "artistic" films but tries to cover everything that was ever shot by a camera and printed on a film reel. In this respect, unfortunately, *Lost Films* is unorganized and has no central theme, and the writing is rather pedestrian. But there is so much raw material here, so many anecdotes about the known and unknown stars of those years, of the early movie moguls and film pioneers, and of politicians, from Trotsky and Mussolini to Coolidge and FDR, that it can serve as a gold mine for researchers in several fields. It is primarily a film book, but its scope is so wide that historians, sociologists and even anthropologists, perhaps, could well profit from it.

—GERALD DORSET

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